

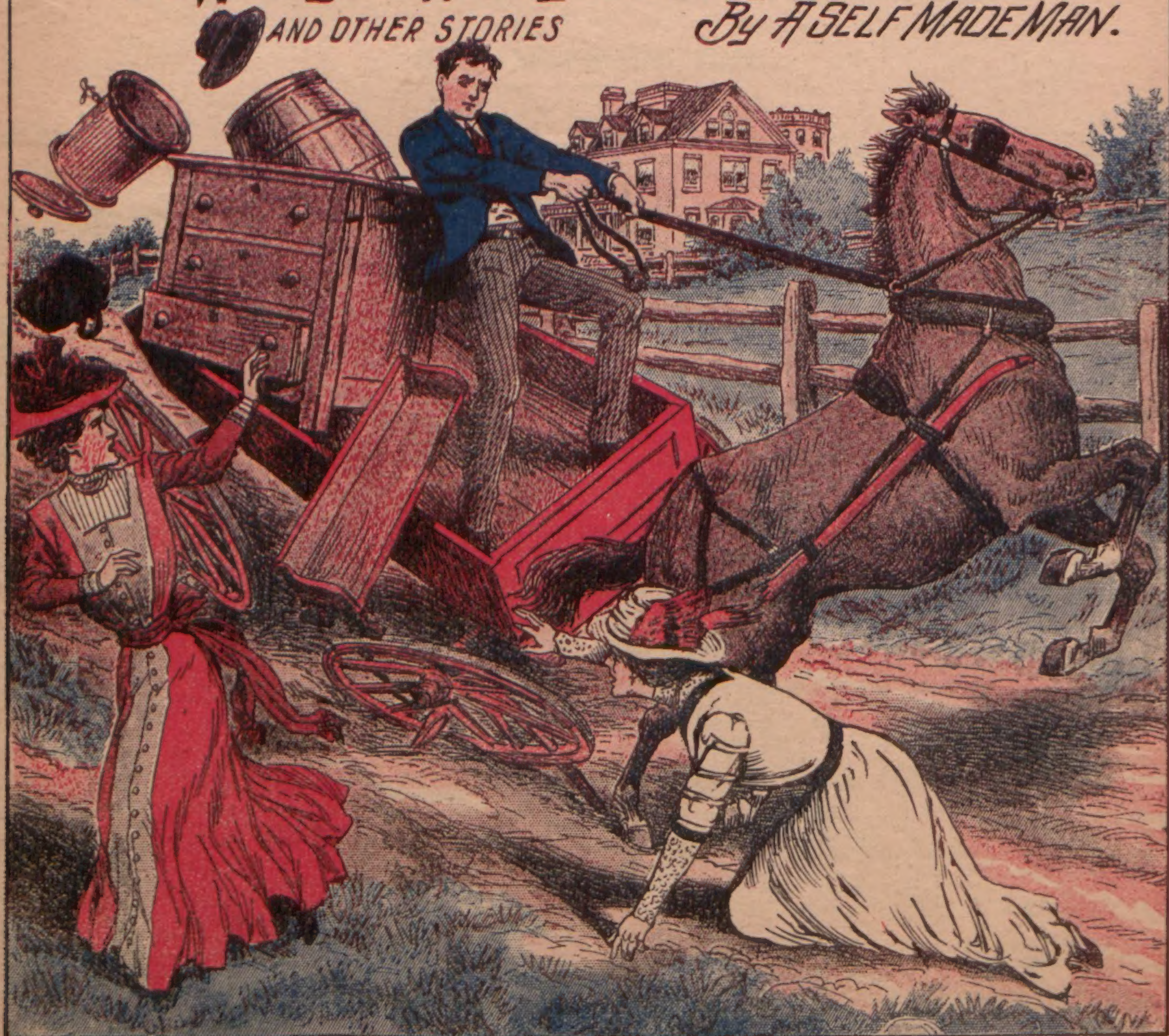
FAME ^{AND} FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS THAT MAKE MONEY.

TRADING TOM; OR, THE BOY WHO BOUGHT EVERYTHING.

AND OTHER STORIES

By A SELF MADE MAN.



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"Whoa, you beast!" He managed to swerve the frightened animal away from the imperilled girl, and she arose in time to escape further danger.

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TRADING TOM

—OR—

THE BOY WHO BOUGHT EVERYTHING

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

CHAPTER I.

A SMASH-UP ON THE ROAD.

"Anything to sell, ma'am?" asked a stalwart, shrewd-looking lad of about eighteen, bringing his rig—a sorrel horse, and a light wagon filled with various kinds of truck and a small collection of new tinware—to a stop before a small cottage facing on the country road on the outskirts of the village of Woodland. "I'll buy anything from a darnin' needle to a sheet anchor, and I pay spot cash."

"Dear me," said the woman of the house, "do you really buy anything?"

"Anything and everything, ma'am, that has any value. I'm not in business for the fun of the thing, but to make a living. What I buy I sell again at a small profit."

"Well, well; you're an honest looking boy. You don't look as if you'd cheat a person like some people do."

"Cheat, ma'am! I hope not. I have found that honesty is the best policy, though an insurance policy is a pretty good thing to have in the house."

"Are you an insurance agent, too?"

"No, ma'am; that isn't in my line."

"What might be your name?"

"It might be Smith, but it isn't. It's just plain Tom Trevor, otherwise known as Trading Tom."

"Trading Tom!" ejaculated the woman.

"Yes, ma'am. Any kind of a trade goes with me. If you've got anything in the house that you don't want, and I can make use of it, I'll name a figure on it, and you can suit yourself about parting with it. You can have the cash, or, if you fancy any of the tinware I've got in the wagon—brand new and up-to-date stuff it is—you can pick it out and I'll name a figure on that. The difference, one way or the other, we'll settle in the coin of the republic. That's fair, isn't it, ma'am?"

The woman looked into the wagon and saw several things that would fill a long-felt want in her humble home, but she wasn't sure she'd be able to make a trade for them.

"I've got a flat-topped bureau that belonged to my husband's mother once upon a time. If you think——"

"I'll look at it, ma'am," interrupted Tom, in a business-like tone, jumping to the ground and hitching his horse to the white picket fence.

She led the way up to the garret and pointed the article, which was of ancient vintage, out to him.

There were three wide drawers in it and Tom pulled them out in turn.

He saw that it was made of Spanish mahogany, but as the thing stood there wasn't any particular demand for such things.

"Well, I guess fifty cents is about the limit, and it might prove a white elephant, at that," he said, looking at the woman.

"Is that all?"

"That's all, ma'am."

"Why, I've heard that it cost more'n fifty dollars."

"I've no doubt it did when it was new and in style, which was long before I was born. Those glass handles, ma'am, aren't in use any more. They'd have to come off and brass ones put in their places. Then the wood would have to be scraped and a coat of French polish applied or nobody would look at it. Some other tinkering would have to be done to make it kind of ship-shape. All that would take time and a little money, and when it was fixed up it would have to be sold cheap to make it move quickly. The only way to make money these days is to turn your capital over as often as possible in a year. Small sales and large profits isn't in fashion any more than this bureau. It's large sales and small profits."

"I guess you make out pretty well, young man, for you're a slick talker."

"Talking, ma'am, is part of my business, and comes natural to me. Is it a trade? I don't believe you'll get a better offer."

"Seems like giving it away," replied the woman reluctantly; "but I ain't got no use for it and it takes up room."

"Anything else you want to get rid of, ma'am? Old magazines or newspapers that lumber up your place? I'll relieve you of them at a nickle a hundred pounds. It isn't a princely sum, I'll admit, but junk-men aren't paying as much as they did for waste paper."

Tom had spied a pile of old weekly story papers thrown carelessly against one of the unfinished walls, and was prepared to take them if she said the word.

The woman didn't want them any longer, so Tom said he'd carry them down and weigh them.

"What else, ma'am?"

"I suppose you ain't got no use for that parrot cage?" she said doubtfully, pointing at the article, which was covered with dust.

"Hardly, ma'am; but we'll call it a dime at a chance."

That was all the woman had to sell, so Tom carried the bureau down and loaded it into his wagon, the paper followed with the bird cage, and Tom announced that there was seventy-five cents coming to her.

Then the woman began to dicker for the tinware she wanted.

The things came to eighty cents, and Tom let the odd nickel go, which pleased the woman greatly, for she felt she had the best of the trade.

Tom noticed a pan of freshly made doughnuts, and the sight made his mouth water.

"Those are bang-up doughnuts, ma'am," he said. "In all my travels I don't think I've seen the equal of those doughnuts. I guess you must be an uncommon fine cook, ma'am."

The woman felt greatly flattered at the praise the boy

bestowed on the doughnuts, and hastened to present him with half a dozen.

"I'll pay for them, ma'am," he said, intending to give her a nickel.

The woman wouldn't listen to that, but told him he was welcome to them.

The boy thanked her, put them in his pocket, and then bade her good-by.

A minute or two later he was driving toward the village with half a doughnut between his teeth.

Presently he heard the "honk—honk!" of an automobile behind him.

The sorrel horse heard it, too, pricked up his ears and grew restive.

As the noise grew louder the horse showed signs of fright.

Whiz! went the auto by, with an ear-piercing screech of its horn.

That was the last straw with the animal.

He shied, then sprang forward and got a gait on.

"Whoa, January!" shouted Tom, standing up and pulling on the reins, as the stuff in the wagon commenced to dance and jingle.

The horse paid no attention, but continued his headlong career down the road.

Tom saw that he couldn't stop him for the present, but he made the animal's flight as hard as possible by tugging on the reins with all his might.

As they flew around a turn in the road, Tom saw a couple of girls walking together right ahead of him.

He yelled lustily to attract their attention, but the clattering of the horse's hoofs and rattling of the wagon had already warned them of danger in the rear.

They turned around in a startled way and beheld the runaway vehicle bearing down on them like a Western cyclone.

The girls screamed with terror and both made a spring for the nearest hedge.

The taller and prettier of the two slipped on a small stone and fell directly in the path of the frightened horse and swaying wagon.

"Whoa!" roared Tom, tugging at the reins and maintaining his balance with great difficulty. Whoa, you beast!

He managed to swerve the frightened animal away from the imperiled girl, and she picked herself up in time to escape the wheels.

Crash!

The forward axle gave way close to the wheel and Tom only saved himself from a bad fall by springing forward on the horse's flanks.

Clinging to his precarious hold like a leach, he worked forward and clapped both hands over the animal's eyes.

The horse lost his gait, stumbled and went down, Tom alighting as nimbly as a circus rider.

The animal was on his feet again in a moment, but his young owner now had him under subjection, and speaking soothingly to him, and patting his nose, gradually quieted him down.

Moving the rig closer to the fence, Tom tied the reins to a post and then gazed ruefully at the wreck of the wagon, which was a hired one, and at the various bits of his property scattered back along the road.

He realized that he was in a bad pickle.

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCES THE VAN AND CHICK SLIVERS.

The two girls, now recovered from their scare, approached on the other side of the road.

Tom bowed politely to them.

"Sorry that I frightened you, young ladies," he said, with a smile that attracted their favorable notice; "but I did the best I could not to run you down."

"I am sure you did," replied the girl, who had had the narrow escape, "and we don't blame you for the shock we got. It's too bad you have met with an accident. What are you going to do?"

"Make the best of a bad situation," replied Tom. "Things can't always be expected to go smooth in this life."

"You take it very good naturedly," she said, with an arch smile that quite caught on with the young trader.

"I don't see any use of making a fuss over the matter. I make it a point never to cry over spilled milk."

"I've seen men, and boys, too, swear and behave very ugly over a mishap not as bad as this. Really, you are behaving very nicely, and we are very sorry for you."

"Thank you for your sympathy, miss—"

"Hutchings. My name is Alice Hutchings."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Hutchings," said Tom, bowing.

"This is my friend, Annie Carr."

"Glad to know you, Miss Carr. Now I will introduce myself. My name is Tom Trevor, but I'm known to the public as Trading Tom."

"Are you a traveling peddler?" asked Miss Hutchings.

"Not exactly, miss. I'm a traveling trader. I buy everything of any value that people want to get rid of, and I pay either in cash or in such merchandise as I carry around with me."

"But you can't carry much in that wagon," she said.

"No, I only hired that for the day of the blacksmith in the village yonder, who is fixing a new tire on one of the wheels of my van."

"Oh, then you have a larger wagon?"

"Yes; quite a good sized box vehicle. It once belonged to a traveling circus. The two horses also belonged to the circus, though they were not performing animals. They are called January and February. That's January there."

"January and February!" laughed Miss Hutchings. "What singular names for horses."

"Kind of different from the ordinary, I'll admit; but I didn't christen them, and as they answer to their names, I couldn't very well change them."

"Well, we won't detain you any longer, Mr. Trevor," said the girl. "You've got to pick your things up. If you will permit, we'll be glad to help you."

"Oh, I couldn't think of troubling you young ladies. I thank you very much for your kind offer, but it won't take me but a few minutes. Only the lighter articles bounced out of the wagon," replied Tom. "You live in the village, I suppose?"

"Miss Carr does," replied Miss Hutchings. "I live in Exeter, and am visiting her for a little while."

"I shall visit Exeter about the end of the week; but I suppose I won't have the pleasure of meeting you there, even if you should be home at that time. It is quite a large town."

"I don't know. I am going home on Friday. Should you have the opportunity, I should be pleased to have you call at my home. I live at No. 254 Jefferson street."

"Thank you for the invitation, Miss Hutchings. I shall lay over Sunday in Exeter, and it would give me great pleasure to pay you a brief visit," said Tom.

The young ladies bowed and walked on while Tom started to pick up the stuff that had tumbled out of his wagon.

He then took the liberty of appropriating a fence rail, which he roped securely to the broken axle, so as to hold the end of the wagon up that he might proceed to the village.

Unhitching January from the post, he ordered him to "Git up," and walked beside him with the reins in his hands.

In the course of fifteen minutes he came in sight of the blacksmith shop, near which his van stood.

The van was a highly ornamented affair, red and gold being the predominating colors, but the gilt was badly tarnished, and the paint and varnish greatly faded, from long exposure to the elements, so that it no longer attracted the eye.

The rear of the van was provided with two half doors, like a pair of shutters on a window, and on the space above the doors was painted, in white letters, "TRADING TOM—the Boy who Buys Everything."

A canvas sign was tacked on each side of the van bearing the following inscription:

"TRADING TOM—the Boy Who Buys Everything
has for sale

POPPER'S WORLD-RENOWNED LINIMENT,
for Man and Beast.

A guaranteed Cure for Burns, Sprains, Bruises, Lameness,
etc.

Very efficacious for Lumbago and Rheumatism.
Small bottles, 25 cents. Large bottles, 50 cents."

On the driver's seat, dozing in the sunshine, reclined a small freckled-faced youth of perhaps fifteen years.

His name was Chick Slivers, and he was Tom's companion and general assistant.

Tom had left him in charge of the outfit when he started out to canvas the surrounding neighborhood in the borrowed wagon.

Chick was a typical city youth whom Tom had picked up in Chicago.

The young trader had rescued Slivers from the clutches of a drunken stepfather who was living on the lad's earnings as a bootblack and lambasting him whenever his receipts were not satisfactory.

Chick, seeing a chance to get away from his unsatisfactory surroundings, cast his fortunes with Trading Tom, and worked faithfully for his keep and spending money.

Tom carried a mattress and blankets in the van, so that boss and assistant slept together and saved the price of lodgings.

Sometimes they took their meals at a cheap hotel, sometimes at a restaurant, and often at a farmhouse along their route.

Occasionally when night overtook them along the road, or they were held up by a rainstorm, they contented themselves with a meal of canned meat or sardines, bread or crackers, and a cup of coffee prepared over a small oil stove.

Tom was always prepared for emergencies of this kind, and the pair of traveling merchants never got left.

The young trader brought his rig to a halt before the blacksmith's door.

"Hello!" exclaimed the disciple of Vulcan, coming forward and looking at the broken axle. "Been having a breakdown, I see."

"Sorry to say I have. My horse took fright at a red auto and made a break of it. All would have been well only for the presence of a couple of young ladies in the road. One of them fell in the effort to get out of the way, and I was forced to turn the wagon sharply to one side to avoid running over her. The strain was too much for the axle under the circumstances, and it snapped. If you'll assess the damage I'll pay for it," said Tom.

"Who were the young ladies, do you know?"

"One was Miss Carr, who lives in this village, and the other was Miss Hutchings, of Exeter, who is visiting her. They are very nice girls. It was Miss Hutchings who had the narrow escape."

"Miss Carr is the daughter of the cashier of the Woodland Bank. Considering the circumstances, I guess I won't charge you anything, young man. You can pay me for putting on that tire, and we'll let it go at that," said the blacksmith, who was a genial man and liberal in his views.

Tom thanked him and inquired how his assistant had put in his time while he was away.

"He helped me quite a bit around the shop and I took him home to dinner with me. I live in that cottage across the way. He sold several bottles of your liniment to farmers who were attracted by the sign on your van. I reckon I'll take a fifty-cent bottle myself," and the man tendered Tom the price.

"Keep your money," said Tom. "I'd like to see myself taking any money from you after you've let me out of paying for the damaged axle. No, sir; you shall have the liniment free, gratis, and for nothing, as an evidence of my appreciation of your generosity."

Tom opened the doors at the back of the van, got a large bottle of Popper's infallible preparation and handed it to the blacksmith.

The slamming of the van door aroused Chick, who sat up and looked around.

"Hello, Tom, got back, have yer? What's the matter wit' the waggin?" he said.

"Had a breakdown along the road," replied the young trader.

"Dat was hard luck," said Chick, descending from his perch in order to help his companion unload the wagon and stow the stuff in the van, which was already fairly full of a miscellaneous assortment of truck.

Strapped on top of the van, and covered from view by a piece of canvas, were several spring mattresses that had outlived their usefulness.

Tom intended to break them up and sell the springs. Strapped under the van was a small upright parlor stove which Tom had bought for old iron.

The driver's seat was a kind of locker, in which were stowed the waterproof coverings for the horses in inclement weather, and a lot of tools and other odds and ends.

Tom having decided not to move on till the following morning, January was, with the blacksmith's permission, turned into his pasture to browse with his companion, February, who had been enjoying that luxury the greater part of the day.

As it would not be dark for over two hours yet, Tom determined to put the time to good advantage.

So he got out a couple of flat steel scrapers and put Chick at work on the body of the Spanish mahogany bureau he had bought of the woman down the road that afternoon, while he tackled the drawers himself.

They worked so industriously that by the time the sun had set behind the distant hills, the entire thing was ready to be gone over with emery paper before the application of the first coat of polish.

The blacksmith was ready to quit for the day, and he invited Tom and his companion to take supper with him.

Tom accepted for Chick and himself, and while the blacksmith was locking up his shop, he and Slivers lifted the bureau into the van and locked the doors.

The blacksmith's wife provided liberally for their young guests, and the two boys enjoyed quite a feast.

After the meal was over the blacksmith took his pipe and went out on the front porch to enjoy his evening smoke, and the boys followed him there.

"How long have you been traveling around this way, Trevor?" he asked.

"About a year," replied Tom.

"Are your parents living?"

"No. I'm an orphan and wholly dependent on my own exertions for a livelihood."

"How came you to go into this business of yours?"

"I kind of took to it naturally. I first went out as assistant to a patent medicine man. After a three months' experience, we had a scrap and he left me stranded in a town about two hundred miles west of Chicago. There I fortunately made the acquaintance of the man who owned the outfit that now belonged to me. He took a fancy to me, and I went traveling with him. He was returning to Chicago. We reached the Windy City in about six weeks. Hardly had we arrived when he was taken down with pneumonia and was carried to a big hospital. He rapidly grew worse, and when the doctor told him that he couldn't recover, he willed his traveling outfit to me, as well as all his money, which wasn't a whole lot. He died, and after he was buried I decided to try my luck as a trader on the same lines he followed, so here I am, and now you have the whole story."

"I judge that you're well adapted for the business from what little I've seen of you," said the blacksmith. "Do you intend to follow it up right along?"

"I'm always on the lookout for a chance to better myself. If I was offered the presidency of a bank or of a railroad system, I don't think I'd turn it down," answered Tom, with a chuckle.

"No, I suppose not," replied the blacksmith dryly. "So you buy everything?"

"Everything that's offered to me that's worth buying. I don't buy trash that is no earthly use to any one. If I didn't stand to make at least a small profit on my purchase I'd have to quit, for neither Chick, nor myself, nor the horses can live on wind. I am running the enterprise as economically as possible, but until I get rid of my present collection of antiques and old junk, I won't be able to tell just how I stand."

"I suppose you do pretty well with the liniment?"

"Yes, so far I've made out very well with it. I'm nearly out of the stock I brought way from Chicago. A fresh supply will reach me at Exeter, where I expect to land on Saturday."

Tom and his host talked for an hour longer, then the blacksmith said he guessed it was time for him to go to bed.

The boys bade him good-night, and, going across to the van, turned in themselves, leaving the doors wide open, as the night was quite warm.

CHAPTER III.

A PAIR OF UNDESIRABLE CITIZENS.

Whether it was the warmth of the night, or because he had eaten more than customary for supper, Chick Slivers, who usually slept like a top, did not rest comfortably.

His slumbers were disturbed by unpleasant visions of his former hard life in Chicago, and about midnight he woke up. The night was still, save for the hum of nocturnal insects and the monotonous croak of frogs.

He hadn't more than got his eyes open before he was aware that two men were talking close to the open doors of the van.

"There ain't no use of disturbin' these chaps," said one of the men. "They're only boys, and cheap skates, at that. I reckon a ten-dollar bill would be a fortin to 'em."

"Oh, I don't know," replied his companion. "A chap who announces that he's ready to buy everything must have money around him, and money is what you and me want about this time."

"Ho! That's a big bluff, that sign. I know what them tradin' Toms are. They never give nothin' for what they git, that is, nothin' worth mentionin'. Even then, they don't pay no cash, but trade off tinware and nicknacks for what they pick up. The only time they ever have money is when they reach some city and get rid of the stuff they bought. Then they blow most of it in over some bar. Oh, I know the hull caboodle of them chaps. I never know'd one yet it paid to go through."

"That's all right, Barney, but this chap sells patent medicine. He ought to have some cash in his jeans."

"They all sell somethin' on the side, but unless they're uncommonly slick they don't set the woods afire with the amount they get rid of. If these chaps had any funds about them, they wouldn't go to sleep with the doors wide open as an invitation for gents of our persuasion to step in and help themselves."

"They couldn't sleep in that van on a night like this with the doors shut," persisted Barney's companion, who seemed eager to pursue certain investigations in the interior of the van in spite of the other's evident disinclination.

"Aw, what's the use talkin', Snuggs, we're only wastin' time hangin' around this van. I tell you there ain't no use tryin' the sneak act on chaps that ain't likely to pan out. If they woke up and ketched us goin' through their clothes, it might queer the job we've got on hand," said Barney.

"How would it? What kin these chaps do ag'in us?"

"They might make a noise and wake up the neighborhood."

"I don't think they would if I showed 'em this gentle persuader," replied the man who had been addressed as Snuggs, pulling out a blackjack.

"What's the use of runnin' risks unless there's somethin' in it?"

"Oh, well, have it your own way," replied Snuggs, in a dissatisfied tone. "If you won't jine in you won't, of course."

"What's the use meddlin' with small fry when we've got somethin' better on hand? When a feller is a high toner like you and me, we ought to stick to our line, 'cept when it pays to do the sneak act. I'll bet these here chaps are as crooked in their trade as we are in ours. I never know'd a tradin' Tom yet who wouldn't pick up everythin' he could get his hands on. Now this crib we've arranged to crack to-night is a likely sort of place to make a haul. The family is well fixed from the looks of the place, and it ain't a hard proposition to get around. We kin easily force one of the cellar winders, and once inside we ought to be able to clean the crib out as slick as a whistle."

"I ain't got no fault to find with your argument, Barney, but as it's a bit too early yet to begin operations in that quarter—for it ain't more'n half-past twelve—I thought we might just as well put in part of the time goin' through this outfit, since all is fish that comes to our net."

Chick listened to the foregoing conversation without moving from his position on the mattress, which was close to the open doors, as the speakers appeared to be so close to the wagon that he didn't want them to learn that he was awake and taking in what they said.

He had no doubt that they were professional crooks, and that they contemplated breaking into one of the village residences.

Although one of the rascals appeared to be opposed to molesting the occupants of the van, Chick wasn't sure but his companion might talk him into it.

He cautiously altered his position by degrees until he got a full view of the doorway.

Then he located the exact position of the crooks.

They were standing just out of sight at the corner of the vehicle near one of the rear wheels.

There was a smell of tobacco in the air, which showed that one, or both of them, was smoking.

Chick decided to arouse Tom.

Placing one hand over his mouth, he shook him into wakefulness.

"Don't make a sound," Chick whispered in his ear. "Dere are two crooks outside near de door, and I ain't sure but dey may try to rob us. Jest listen to dem talkin'."

Tom was onto the situation at once.

He was a quick-witted lad by nature, and always ready to grapple with any emergency that presented itself.

"How long have they been there?" he asked his companion in a low tone.

"Dunno. I woke up about five minutes ago and heard dem talkin'."

"What makes you think they're crooks?"

"I heard dem say dey was goin' to break inter some house around here ter-night and clean it out," replied Slivers.

"If they intend to do that there isn't much doubt as to what kind of men they are," said Tom.

"One of dem wants to go t'rough us fust, as he says it's too soon to tackle the house; but de other chap doesn't think we're wort' robbin'."

Tom chuckled.

Then he reached under the head of the mattress and pulled out a navy revolver.

"If they meddle with us they'll get a warm reception," he said grimly.

"Dey t'ink we're asleep," whispered Chick. "De chap what objects to tacklin' us said that if we had anytin' to lose we wouldn't leave de doors wide open as an invitation for anybody to step in and pinch our property."

"Seems reasonable. They wouldn't find much on us if they did go through our clothes. They'd have a nice job trying to find my funds, I'll bet, even if I gave them permission to hunt around."

The boys stopped talking and gave their attention to the two rascals outside.

They had apparently given up the idea of interfering with the inmates of the van, believing the game was hardly worth the candle.

After discussing the project they had in view of robbing one of the best houses in the village, one of them consulted a silver watch he carried and announced that it was one o'clock.

"It's safe enough now. I guess, to move on the crib," he said. "These country folks generally go to bed early. The folks at the house ought to be sound asleep by this time. Those cellar windows are a great institution. They come in mighty handy for us. A jimmy'll open one in no time at all, and then all we've got to do is to lower ourselves inside and we're in the house."

"S'pose there's an iron door at the head of the cellar steps," said his companion. "Some houses have 'em. It will give us more trouble than if we forced one of the first-floor windows."

"The chances are there isn't an iron door," replied Snuggs. "Just a wooden one with ordinary bolt. We'll go through that as easily as through a cheese."

"We've got to look out that we don't run against a night cop. These villages are generally patrolled by two or more constables."

"There ain't a chance in fifty of our meetin' one," said Snuggs. "They have such long beats that they can't cover the same spot more'n twice of a night."

"We'll keep our weather-eye liftin', just the same, for we can't afford to take no chances," said the man called Barney.

"Of course we can't. Well, if you're ready we'll make a start."

Barney was ready.

The men stooped, picked up their carpet bag and walked off down the road leading into the main street of the village.

CHAPTER IV.

"HANDS UP!"

The moment the pair of rascals made a move the boys sat up and looked after them.

"Chick, we've got to follow them," said Tom, shoving the revolver into one of the pockets of his jacket.

"What for?" asked Slivers, in some surprise.

He was pleased that the men had gone off without inter-

fering with the van, and did not see the necessity of butting into their business.

"We must save that house from being robbed."

"And mebbe get into a heap of trouble doin' it," replied Chick, who wasn't in favor of his companion's suggestion.

"It's our duty to try and prevent those rascals from accomplishing their purpose. However, if you don't want to come with me you can stay and watch the van. I'll undertake the matter alone."

"No, you won't," replied Chick decidedly. "If you're bound to foller dem chaps, I'm wit' you."

"Then come on before we lose sight of them."

They sprang out of the van and Tom locked the door.

Keeping close in the shadow of the hedge, they proceeded to follow the crooks to their destination.

The men turned up the second cross-street they came to, and then the boys hurried their pace lest the rascals should get away from them.

When they turned into the cross-street, they saw the men walking leisurely along scarcely half a block ahead.

"Keep behind me, Chick," said Tom, "then if one of them should look behind there will be less chance of him noticing us."

After that they continued along in Indian file, close to the fence.

The dwelling houses, most of them modest looking cottages, became more numerous and closer together as they proceeded.

In a short time they were in the heart of the residential part of Woodland.

Big shade trees bordered the street on both sides and threw a gloom along the narrow sidewalk.

The boys found these trees of great advantage in shadowing the rascals.

At length the men stopped in front of quite a pretentious-looking residence.

The boys took refuge behind the trunk of one of the trees and watched them.

The crooks, after a sharp look around the neighborhood, entered the grounds.

"Come on," said Tom. "That must be the house they have planned to rob."

The boys hastened forward, and caught a fleeting view of the men disappearing around the back of the dwelling.

They stepped into the grounds and followed the route taken by the rascals.

Tom motioned Chick to hold back as they drew near the corner of the house.

Glancing cautiously around the end of the building, Tom saw that there was a two-story ell in the rear.

The presence of numerous small windows near the ground showed that the cellar extended under the entire house.

The two men were kneeling beside one of the windows under the ell.

Tom heard the sharp crack of wood giving way under the pressure of a jimmy.

The rascals soon succeeded in forcing the window open, leaving an opening sufficiently large for them to pass through, one at a time.

One man entered feet first and dropped out of view.

His companion waited till he had made an investigation of the door leading up from the cellar.

The door proved to be an ordinary wooden one, held by a common bolt.

This was regarded by the professional house-breaker as a small obstacle, so he returned to the window and told Barney that everything was serene.

Barney passed the two carpet bags in to him, and then followed himself.

"They've forced their way into the cellar through one of the windows," said Tom to Chick.

"What you goin' to do now?" asked Slivers.

"If I knew where the head constable lives I'd send you to his house, and then the rascals could be nabbed with the goods. As it is, I must attract the attention of the people of the house, and let them know that there are thieves on the premises. I don't want to alarm the crooks, though, if I can help it. Here, Chick, take this revolver and stand watch near that cellar window yonder. Keep to one side of it, and if the rascals attempt to get out cover them and keep them in the cellar," said Tom.

"All right," replied Slivers, who felt able to stand off anybody with the revolver in his hand.

Tom then hurried to the front of the house, and picking

up a handful of fine gravel flung it at one of the second-story windows.

The first throw produced no result, though the gravel made quite a noise on the pane, but the second brought a man clad in pajamas hurriedly to the window.

Tom saw him peering out and made motions to him.

The gentleman threw up the lower pane and asked him, in no pleasant tone, what he wanted.

"Two thieves have just broken into the cellar of your house and intend to rob you, sir. You've got a revolver in your room, haven't you?" asked Tom.

"Yes. I've got one under my pillow."

"Better get it. I'll get mine from my assistant, then I'll climb up on this porch and help you out all I can."

Tom rushed back to where Chick crouched on guard over the cellar window.

"Hand me the shooter. I'm going into the house by way of the porch and the second-story window. Look around the yard and get a piece of wood you can use for a club. Should one of the rascals stick his head out of that window you can give him a rap. The advantage is all on your side."

While Chick went looking for a piece of wood suitable for the purpose in view, Tom returned to the front of the building, climbed the porch with the agility of a monkey, and presented himself at the window, where Mr. Carr stood, revolver in hand, waiting for him.

The cashier helped him in at the window and then asked him what plan he thought would be the best to adopt.

Tom kicked off his shoes first.

"Follow me, Mr. Carr. Perhaps we can catch these rascals off their guard and capture them. I suppose you have many articles of value downstairs to attract their attention?"

"Yes. My silverware is locked in a cupboard in the dining-room. No doubt they have tools that will enable them to get at it easily," said the cashier.

"I guess they have, for they have two carpet bags with them."

Tom opened the door leading out on the first landing, and going to the head of the stairs listened for sounds that would indicate the presence of the crooks below.

All was silent, however.

Taking the lead, he started cautiously downstairs, holding his revolver ready for instant action, and followed by Mr. Carr.

"Can we reach the library from this hall?" Tom asked the owner of the house.

"No; we'll have to pass through the parlor to reach it."

"Which is the parlor door?"

"This one," replied Mr. Carr, pointing.

"How do you reach the dining-room from here?" asked Tom.

"That door there opens into it."

Tom tiptoed over to it and opened it cautiously.

There was no light there nor any sign of the thieves.

"I suppose there is a door opening out of the cellar?" said the boy.

"Yes, into the kitchen."

"Is it kept locked?"

"There is a strong bolt on it."

"Is it strong enough to give the men much trouble?"

"Not if they have suitable implements."

"I don't hear them, so I think they haven't forced their way out of the cellar yet. Let's look into the parlor and library. If they're not there you can telephone for the constable."

Tom entered the parlor.

It was dark and tenantless.

He and Mr. Carr then passed on to the library.

There was no one there, so the cashier walked over to the telephone.

"I'm going into the kitchen, Mr. Carr. Is it at the back of the dining-room?"

"Yes. You'll reach it through the pantry passage."

Tom hurried away.

He looked into the dining-room again before venturing to enter, but it was the same as before.

Opening a door on the farther side, he looked into a narrow passage.

At the farther end was the kitchen door, and Tom opened it with due caution.

The thieves were not there, but Tom heard the sound of a small saw at a door which evidently led into the cellar.

The door had given the crooks a great deal more trouble than they had anticipated.

They failed to push back the bolt with their instruments because the bolt was a strong one, and fitted snugly into its socket.

They wasted nearly half an hour over it, and then had to get out a center-bit and bore a number of holes around the bolt.

Then Barney inserted a thin steel saw and proceeded to cut from hole to hole.

The job was about completed when Tom appeared on the scene.

He saw a lamp standing on a table.

Striking a match, and shading the glare with his jacket, he lighted the lamp and turned it low.

Then he waited, revolver cocked, ready for business.

Presently the piece of wood to which the bolt was attached fell out on the floor, the crooks pushed the door open and entered the kitchen.

Tom at once turned up the light and covered them with his revolver.

"Hands up, both of you, or I'll fill you full of holes!" he cried in a tone of determination.

The two rascals started back aghast.

CHAPTER V.

TOM AND THE TWO CROOKS.

"Throw up your hands, I say," repeated Tom.

Although they saw that they were opposed only by a boy, his resolute demeanor and the cocked revolver intimidated them.

So they raised their hands and muttered imprecations under their breath.

"Back up against that wall," ordered Tom.

"I say, young fellow, let us off, will you, and we'll go away," said Snuggs. "We didn't intend to take much. Just enough to keep us from starvin'. We're in hard luck. Been out of work for a year and can't get nothin' to do. We've got hungry wives and kiddies at home, and that's enough to drive a fellow into anythin'. If you were in our shoes you'd do somethin' desperate, too," said Snuggs, hoping to work on the sympathies of their captor.

The rascal might have saved his breath, for Tom wasn't deceived a little bit.

He was wise to the world and knew that the crook was lying.

"So you want me to understand that you're not professional thieves, eh?" he said sarcastically.

"Sure, we're not. We're just two unfortunate chaps who's up ag'in the world."

"Well, you'll be up against the village magistrate in the morning. You can tell him your story and perhaps he'll sympathize with you," replied Tom, with a chuckle.

"Magistrates ain't got no hearts," replied Snuggs, with a disgusted look. "If you'll let us go we promise not to do anythin' like this ag'in."

"How much is your promise worth?" asked Tom, in a slightly jeering tone.

"We'll stick to it, honest, we will."

At that moment Mr. Carr stuck his head in at the door and was rather astonished at the scene he beheld.

It looked dramatic to his eyes—Tom holding the two rascals at bay with his revolver.

Tom heard the cashier as he stepped into the room, but he didn't dare take his eyes off the crooks.

"Is that you, Mr. Carr?" he asked.

"Yes. I see you've got the rascals cornered. You're a brave young fellow," replied the cashier.

"Did you reach the constable all right, sir?"

"Yes. He's coming right over with help."

"Open the kitchen door and call my assistant in here, will you, Mr. Carr?"

"Certainly," replied the gentleman, and in a few moments Chick was in the room.

"Have you a piece of clothes-line handy that we can use for tying these men?" asked Tom.

The cashier got a long piece.

"Now, Chick," said Tom, "just search the pockets of those chaps and see if they have any weapons. If they're a couple of unfortunate chaps, as they claim to be, they won't be armed, but if they're professional crooks they probably will be."

Tom warned the fellows not to make any resistance, as he didn't intend to take any chances with them, so they submitted with very bad grace to be searched by Chick.

A revolver was found in the hip-pocket of each, and in addition Snuggs had a small dirk and a slung-shot.

"That's quite an arsenal for a pair of unfortunates to carry around," said Tom, in a sarcastic tone. "What excuse have you for doing it?" Don't you know that it's against the law to carry concealed weapons?"

Neither Snuggs nor Barney made any reply.

They simply glared at Tom in no friendly way.

It would probably have gone hard with the boys if they could have got the upper hand on him for a few minutes.

Tom told Chick to bind their hands behind their backs, and they had to allow the operation to be performed, for they could see that the young trader meant business.

"Hand them chairs, Chick, so they can sit down," said Tom. "They might as well be comfortable till the constable comes and takes charge of them."

"You'd better let us go, young fellow," said Snuggs, with a vindictive look. "If you don't, you're likely to regret it."

"I'll take my chance of that. I don't think you'll have a chance to try and get back at me for many moons. This job will send you to State prison for several years, and when you get out it will be hard to tell where I'll be. I may be dead or in Europe or on my wedding tour," chuckled Tom.

The two men scowled at him.

"You'll have to get a new door, Mr. Carr," said Tom, picking up the piece of wood to which the bolt was attached and holding it up for the cashier's inspection. "This is the way they got around the bolt. Bolts on wooden doors don't bother the modern burglar much. Here are the carpet bags I told you about," continued the boy, handing the articles into the kitchen from their roosting place on the cellar steps.

One of the bags contained a small kit of up-to-date burglar tools; the other had wearing apparel and some articles of food in it.

By the time they had examined the contents of the two bags the constable drove up in a light wagon with two of his day assistants.

"So you've caught the rascals, have you?" he said on entering the kitchen.

"The credit of their capture is due to this young man," replied Mr. Carr, indicating the young trader. "He is as nery a young fellow as I ever met. Let me introduce you to each other. Mr. Brown, Thomas Trevor."

"Glad to know you, young man," said the constable heartily, offering his hand. "You are a stranger to our village."

"Yes; I only arrived yesterday morning, and I shall depart as soon as I can get away. The capture of these chaps is bound to detain me here, for I'll have to appear as a witness against them," replied Tom.

"That's right," replied the constable. "Might I ask where you hail from?"

"From Chicago, though I haven't any home there. The truth of the matter is my home is my van. I'm a sort of a rolling stone—always on the go."

"A traveling salesman, I suppose?"

"Not exactly. I'm a traveling trader. Professionally speaking, I'm Trading Tom—the boy who buys everything."

"You buy everything, do you?" laughed the constable.

"Everything that's worth anything."

"I've got a house and lot I'd like to sell you, then."

"I'm afraid I couldn't carry that off in my van, so it would hardly be worth my while to trade with you."

The constable laughed, and turning to his two men, told them to bundle the prisoners into the wagon.

In a few minutes the wagon drove away to the lock-up, which was close to the constable's house.

Tom then turned to Mr. Carr and said he guessed, now that their mission had been brought to a satisfactory end, he and Chick would return to the van to finish their night's rest.

The cashier thanked him for his valuable services in frustrating and capturing the thieves, and assured him that he would consider himself under lasting obligations to him.

Tom told him that he was welcome, and that as far as he was concerned he believed he had only done his duty.

"Well, I'll see you at the magistrate's office during the morning," said Mr. Carr; "and I shall expect you to dine with me so that I shall have the chance to introduce you to

my wife and daughter, though you have met Annie already in an informal way. Both she and Miss Hutchings spoke very nicely about you, in spite of the fact that you nearly frightened them to death when your horse ran away."

"Much obliged for the invitation, Mr. Carr, and I may delay my departure from the village long enough to accept your kind hospitality," replied Tom, thinking of Alice Hutchings' bright eyes, and rather glad of the chance to see her again.

The boys then took their leave of the cashier and returned to their van.

Fifteen minutes after their arrival both were sleeping soundly, with the stars of heaven shining brightly in at the open doors of the old circus vehicle.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE EXAMINATION.

The village blacksmith was an early riser, and when he had plenty of work on hand had his shop open by six o'clock.

When he crossed the road on this particular morning he glanced into the van and saw the boys still sound asleep.

At seven his wife rang the bell to call him to breakfast.

The blacksmith, not knowing that the boys had been up part of the night, thought it time to arouse them so they could breakfast with him as arranged the night before, so he went to the van and shook them.

"You fellows sleep like tops," he remarked as the boys sat up. "It's seven o'clock. Time you were stirring."

"We were up part of the night, Mr. Jones, that's why we're late in waking up," replied Tom.

"What kept you up? There wasn't any excitement around this neighborhood that I know of."

"Burglars kept us up," replied Tom.

"Burglars!" exclaimed the astonished blacksmith.

"Yes. Chick and I captured a couple at the residence of Mr. Carr."

"That's more than a mile from here in the village. How came you to go there?" asked the blacksmith, clearly surprised at Tom's statement.

"I'll tell you the story after I've washed up."

"You can tell it at the breakfast table. Come along. You'll find a basin and towel outside the kitchen door."

Tom and Chick followed the hospitable blacksmith across to his house and were soon seated at the breakfast table with a bountiful spread before them.

Then Tom between bites related the events of the night to the blacksmith and his wife.

They were amazed at the incident, for such a thing as a burglary in Woodland was as rare as hen's teeth.

"You are certainly a nervy and resolute young chap," said the blacksmith. "The cashier's house would no doubt have been cleaned out of valuables but for you."

"I guess they'd have got away with the goods all right if they hadn't made the mistake of stopping beside my van and discussing their plans. One of them wanted to go through our clothes, and probably the van as well, but the other didn't think we were worth the trouble," laughed Tom. "Had they tried it on they'd have got more than they bargained for in the shape of a bullet in their hides. I'm always prepared for hard characters who attempt to molest Chick and me, whether they be tramps or what not."

"When you go to the magistrate's office this morning you'll find you have made a reputation in the village, for by that time most everybody in Woodland will have heard how you caught the two burglars at Mr. Carr's home. The magistrate is bound to compliment you, and no doubt Mr. Carr will reward you handsomely."

"Oh, we're not looking for any reward. We are satisfied with having done our duty to the community."

"Well, it's lucky for Mr. Carr that you were in the neighborhood. I have no doubt had the burglars been successful his loss would have been considerable."

After breakfast Tom got the bureau out, removed the old-fashioned glass handles and treated it to a first coat of polish, which made it look a whole lot different to what it had been when it came into his possession.

Later on he intended to buy suitable brass handles and put them on the drawers to give it a modern appearance and make it saleable at a fair price.

As the polish wasn't dry when the time came for Tom and Chick to go to the magistrate's office, the young trader

got permission from the blacksmith to take it over and leave it on his back porch, out of harm's way.

When Tom and Chick reached the magistrate's office they found a big crowd on the outside, for the news of the attempted robbery of Mr. Carr's house had circulated all over the village by that time, and curiosity was on tiptoe to see the burglars.

They were represented as desperate fellows, who had been armed with revolvers at the time of their capture, and the villagers were just as anxious to see the boy who had caught them unassisted.

The moment Tom and Chick appeared they became the focus of all eyes.

The clerk opened the court as the magistrate entered from his private office and took his seat behind a raised flat-top desk.

The charge against the rascals was read and they were asked whether they were guilty or not guilty.

They pleaded not guilty in sullen tones.

The magistrate, who acted as public prosecutor, called Mr. Carr to the witness chair.

He proceeded to tell how he had been aroused from his sleep by the pattering of gravel against one of the windows of his bedroom, and how on going to the window he saw a boy below, who, on being questioned as to his presence and actions, said that his name was Tom Trevor, and that he was a stranger in the village.

He then narrated in substance the conversation which had taken place between him and the boy trader with reference to the presence of burglars in the house.

He told how Tom had climbed up to the room; how they had gone downstairs on a tour of investigation, without results; how Tom had left him at the telephone in the library, and how when he subsequently went in search of the boy he had found him in the kitchen standing over the burglars with his revolver.

The magistrate asked him a few questions and then called on Tom Trevor.

The chief interest centered in the boy's testimony, for everybody was anxious to hear how he had managed single-handed to catch the crooks.

Tom told his story concisely and directly to the point.

He showed no disposition to make himself out as a great hero.

He simply confined himself to facts, and made those facts perfectly clear.

The magistrate asked him one or two questions, and then Chick took his place.

He had little to tell, as he had only taken a secondary part in the affair.

The last witness was Constable Brown, and his testimony chiefly concerned what he saw when he reached the Carr home with his assistants.

The magistrate then asked the prisoners if they had anything to say in their own behalf.

They had nothing to say.

Indeed, the strong evidence against them, and the presence in court of their kit of housebreaking tools, left them no loophole to crawl out at.

The magistrate therefore remanded them for trial at Exeter, the county seat, and they were taken there that afternoon and locked up in the county jail.

As Tom and Chick were not residents of the county, the magistrate said it would be necessary for them to furnish bonds for their appearance as witnesses at Exeter when the trial came on.

"Suppose we can't furnish bonds, what, then?" asked Tom.

"I will have to give you in charge of the constable, who will then become responsible for your appearance," replied the magistrate.

"Can't you take our promise to appear? It won't pay me to have to lay over in this village for a month or two. I couldn't afford it," remonstrated Tom.

"The law gives me no alternative. Perhaps Mr. Carr, who is under great obligations to you for the part you have played in this affair, will make himself responsible for your appearance in the Exeter court at the proper time."

"I will do that, your honor," said the cashier, jumping up. "I will sign their bonds, and offer my house and ground as security."

"Very well, Mr. Carr. I accept you. My clerk will prepare the bonds at once, and as soon as you have signed them these boys may depart," said the magistrate.

Half an hour later Mr. Carr and the two boys walked out of the courtroom, and found a considerable crowd of the curious on the walk outside.

"You will both come to my house to dinner, where you are expected," said the cashier.

Chick objected to this part of the programme, and was finally allowed to return to the van, where he was taken to dinner at the blacksmith's house.

Tom accompanied Mr. Carr to his home, and was duly presented to Mrs. Carr, Annie Carr and Alice Hutchings, and received a warm greeting from all three.

CHAPTER VII.

TOM AS AN HONORED GUEST.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Trevor," laughed Miss Hutchings when the two girls got Tom to themselves for a few minutes while waiting for dinner to be announced. "Neither Annie nor I had any idea we should see you so soon again."

"It's the unexpected that always happens," replied Tom, with a smile.

"It seems so. It appears that you have made quite a hero of yourself since we saw you out on the county road."

"You mean in reference to the burglar episode?"

"Certainly. You have placed Annie and her parents under great obligations by your timely appearance on the scene, and your plucky conduct afterward."

"I hope they won't lose any sleep over the matter," chuckled Tom. "I didn't do any more than a fellow ought to have done in my place."

"And just to think Annie and I slept through it all, and so did Mrs. Carr. We knew nothing about the house having been visited by thieves until Mr. Carr told us at the breakfast table this morning. When he said you were the one who saved his property, and captured the rascals as well, we were surprised. Were we not, Annie?"

"I should say so," answered Miss Carr, with a glance of admiration at Tom.

"Had we known that burglars were in the house I'm afraid we should have been dreadfully alarmed," said Miss Hutchings.

"I believe I should have fainted," said Miss Carr.

"It was fortunate, then, that you did not know," replied Tom.

"You must be awfully brave to face those men, and they were armed, too, Mr. Carr said," remarked Miss Hutchings.

"I was also armed, you know."

"But there were two men against you."

"I took them off their guard and got the drop on them. That put them in my power, and I let them see that I meant business, so they didn't dare take any chances. It is well for them that they made no attempt to draw their weapons. Had they done so I would have shot them."

"Would you really have done that, Mr. Trevor?" asked Miss Hutchings.

"I would have been obliged to in self-defense."

"Father says that you are a most remarkable boy," said Miss Carr.

"I'm afraid your father exaggerates my importance."

"I'm sure he does not," said the girl sweetly.

"I think myself that you are a most unusual boy," put in Miss Hutchings. "I'm positive my brother, who is about your age, wouldn't dare act as you did under the same circumstances."

"You can't tell what your brother is capable of doing until he is put to the test. He must be a nice fellow if he's like you."

"Thank you," replied the girl, with a blush and a bow. "I'm afraid you are a great flatterer."

"I didn't intend to flatter you. I merely expressed my sentiments on the subject."

"Well, you mustn't throw any bouquets at me, for you might make me vain."

"I think you're too sensible to let a little thing like that have any effect on you."

"Dear me, you are certainly very complimentary," replied Miss Hutchings, with a coquettish smile. "I think we had better change the subject."

"Very well," replied Tom coolly. "What shall we talk about?"

"Tell us about the proceedings at the court. Annie and I would like to hear what took place there."

"Certainly. It will give me great pleasure to give you a general idea of the examination of the rascals," said Tom, who proceeded to describe all that happened in the magistrate's office that morning.

As he finished his story dinner was announced, and he escorted both young ladies into the dining-room.

A special spread had been prepared in honor of the young trader, and he enjoyed the meal immensely.

He held up his end of the conversation in good shape, and the girls were more than ever attracted by his genial deportment.

Mr. Carr asked him many questions about his business, and how he was getting on, all of which he answered with perfect frankness.

"I think I should enjoy traveling around the country like you do," said Miss Hutchings.

"All's not gold that glitters, Miss Hutchings," replied Tom. "I'm not touring for pleasure, but to make a living and something over, with an eye to the future."

"But surely you find some amusement in it as well, don't you?" she said.

"Well, I guess Chick and I don't miss any that we run across."

"Are you ever bothered by tramps on the road?"

"We have been once or twice, but when I pulled that gun of mine on them they skedaddled in short order. There's a heap of persuasion in a loaded six-shooter. It's an argument that nobody likes to contradict."

"Particularly when the man behind the gun means business," laughed Mr. Carr.

"I never pull my weapon unless I do mean business," replied Tom. "I know what my rights are, and I always insist on getting all that's coming to me."

"A boy of your caliber is pretty certain to come out at the top of the heap," said the cashier.

"A fellow has got to hold his own in this world or go to the wall. I haven't met many people in the course of my travels who are anxious to put themselves out for my benefit. I have traded with some pretty sharp people who had very little sentiment in their make-up. They counted on getting my scalp, but I guess they were disappointed in their expectations. I have rubbed against the world a good deal in my time, and that has a tendency to cut one's eye-teeth."

"We passed your van on our way home yesterday," said Miss Carr. "It does look very much like a circus wagon, rather the worse for wear. We noticed a small boy apparently asleep on the driver's seat. Was that your assistant?"

"Yes, that was Chick. He's cut his eye-teeth, too, in a pretty hard school. Anybody who tried to fool Slivers would have to get up long before daylight to make any sort of success of it, and the chances are then he'd come out second best. There are no flies on Chick, you can take my word for it. I find him of great use to me. He's as honest as the day is long, which can't be said of every boy brought up as he was."

"You call yourself Trading Tom—the boy who buys everything," smiled Miss Hutchings.

"That is my trade-mark."

"It is certainly an unique one; but of course you don't really buy everything."

"I come as near to it as can be reasonably expected."

"I presume you are able to resell at a profit whatever you purchase?"

"I certainly do, or there wouldn't be any use in me continuing the business. Nearly everything I buy has no great apparent value in the eyes of the seller, or the person wouldn't be disposed to part with them. Everybody has some truck around the house that is in the way and of no use to them. For instance, no one cares to retain a demoralized spring mattress. I am always ready to buy such things. I could not resell it, however, in that shape. I buy it with an eye to what I can get out of the springs. The framework cuts no figure whatever in the transaction."

"I see," said Miss Hutchings.

"Another example I will mention. A short time before I met you young ladies yesterday I bought, among other things, an ancient bureau of a woman who had had it stowed away in her garret many years. She wanted to get rid of it, and I paid her fifty cents for the privilege of relieving her of it. As it stood I could hardly have got

more than fifty cents for it of a second-hand dealer. It was made of Spanish mahogany, and must have cost money when it was new and in style. The wood, however, was black and tarnished from age and neglect, and didn't look very inviting. You ought to see it now, though. Chick and I set to work and scraped it thoroughly, and this morning I applied a coat of polish to it. That brought out all the fine points of the wood, same as if it were new. When it gets a second coat it will look absolutely new. I removed the old glass handles, which are obsolete, and I shall replace them with attractive bright brass ones. Then I shall offer that bureau for sale at \$10, and I won't have much trouble in getting it, either."

"That will give you a good profit," said Miss Carr.

"Which I think I'm entitled to for rescuing an article from oblivion and making it of use and importance once more, just as I saved Chick from the slums of Chicago and hope to make a man of him in time."

"That was a very worthy action, Mr. Trevor," said Mrs. Carr, "and you no doubt will get your reward in some way."

"I am getting my reward right along, for Chick is my right bower, and thinks he can't do too much for me."

"That shows he appreciates what you did for him."

"Oh, Chick is all right—a sort of rough diamond that only requires to be ground a bit and polished to show what is really in him."

"I suppose you don't always expect to be a traveling trader?" said Miss Carr.

"No. I am ambitious to be something a great deal better than that. As soon as I see a chance to better myself I shall dispose of my outfit without the least regret. But while I remain a trader I shall continue to devote my best efforts to making the occupation a success, for I believe that whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing as well as possible. It is by putting one's best efforts in whatever one puts his hand to, no matter how humble, that he blazes the path to success."

"That's right, young man," said Mr. Carr approvingly. "If you follow that sentiment you are bound to become a successful man, if you live."

Tom's words also made more than a passing impression on Miss Hutchings.

She secretly applauded Tom's views, and the young trader rose greatly in her opinion.

She felt that he was destined for a much higher plane of usefulness than that which he now occupied, and she entertained no doubt of his ultimate rise in the world.

After dinner the party adjourned to the sitting-room again; but Tom did not stay much longer, as he said it was necessary for him to return to his van.

When he rose to go Mr. Carr, with a few well-chosen words of thanks for his services, presented him with a gold watch and chain, to which Mrs. Carr added a handsome chain.

A couple of hours later he and Chick, perched on the driver's seat, were on the road once more, with the houses of Woodland village fading out of sight behind.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN.

They traveled on till darkness overtook them, and then Tom halted up at a spot where the road widened out around a tall, wide-spreading walnut tree.

They took out the horses and tied them to the tree where they could get plenty of grass.

Then Tom got down the gas stove, made a pot of coffee and fried a mess of ham, eggs and potatoes, which, with fresh bread and butter, made a tip-top meal.

After the things were washed up they got the bureau out of the van, and while Chick held the reflector lamp Tom applied the second coat of polish.

They were standing between the wagon and the fence, when Tom calculated it would be perfectly safe, and turned in, after hanging a lighted lantern outside.

Thus they left the doors only partly open on a chance.

They were not disturbed that night and were up about sunrise.

The bureau was dry and fit to be handled by that time. Breakfast over, the horses were hitched up and they started on again.

In about an hour they came in sight of a big farmhouse setting back about half a mile from the road.

Tom drove up the lane and entered the yard.

A woman and three girls ranging from fifteen to twenty came to the back door, attracted by the unusual spectacle of the faded fancy van.

"Good-morning, ma'am," said Tom, with Chesterfieldian politeness. "I'm Trading Tom—the boy who buys everything. If you've got any old paper or odds and ends around the house that you would like to get rid of in exchange for new tinware, pins, needles, ribbons and such like notions too numerous to mention, or cash, I'll talk business with you."

"I'm afraid you peddlers don't pay anything to speak of," said the woman.

"I'm not a regular peddler, ma'am. I make a specialty of buying old truck. I will treat you perfectly fair."

"I'll get the clock," said the oldest girl, who seemed to be eager to secure something from Tom.

Tom unlocked a flap behind him and exposed a wide shelf covered with boxes of different sizes.

"Would you like to see the latest thing in ribbons, ma'am?" he asked, taking out several boxes and stepping down to the ground.

The temptation was irresistible, and mother and girls gathered around him to examine the goods.

They wanted ribbons of several colors and sizes and asked the prices.

Tom quoted city prices, and as they knew he was not trying to cheat them, they bought something like three dollars' worth.

The oldest girl now appeared with the clock, and while he was inspecting it, the young lady selected some bright pink ribbon for a sash, and some narrow ribbon for a collar she intended to make.

They also bought some needles, several papers of pins, tape, spools of thread and a few other things, and finally selected a dish-pan.

Their purchases in all amounted to about six dollars.

Tom said he would allow a quarter for the clock.

"It will have to be repaired, ma'am, before I can sell it," he said, and the woman let it go at that.

The farmer himself now made his appearance from the barn and looked curiously at the vehicle.

He read the sign on the outside.

"Do you guarantee that liniment?" he asked Tom.

"It will do all that is claimed for it," replied the young trader. "It is one of the best preparations of its kind on the market. I have sold nearly six dozen bottles since I left Chicago. I have only two of the large size left."

"If I thought it was any good I'd buy a bottle," said the farmer, a bit doubtfully.

"Maybe you've got some old iron around you'd like to trade off," said Tom.

"No, but I've got a trunk full of old newspapers in the garret you're welcome to if you will take it for the liniment."

"I'll look at what you have," said Tom. "Get the scales, Chick."

Tom accompanied the farmer to the garret, where he looked the trunk over and weighed the paper.

"So you want to trade that for a big bottle of liniment?" he said.

"I'm willing to."

"I can do a little better by you than that. I always aim to do the fair thing and never try to take advantage of a person. I'll allow you seventy-five cents. That is a quarter toward the payment of what your wife and daughters just bought."

"That's pretty square," replied the farmer, evidently pleased. "I'll help you down with the trunk and contents."

When a settlement was made in the yard Tom received \$4.60 in money.

He then bade the people good-by and started for the road, after presenting the oldest girl with a fancy ornament formed of brilliants for her hair, which she accepted with an exclamation of delight.

About noon-time they reached the village of Æsop, and Tom stopped his outfit in front of a small restaurant.

Giving the horse a bag of oats each, the boys entered the eating-house and ate a modest dinner.

The van during their absence attracted a whole lot of attention and curiosity, particularly the sign on the back.

"TRADING TOM—the Boy Who Buys Everything."

"Say, Jimmy," said one kid to another, "do you s'pose he'd buy a red-hot stove?"

"Why don't you ask him?"

"Where is he?"

"In that restaurant eatin' his dinner."

"Is that him with the little runt at the second table?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Got a funny lookin' face, hasn't he? I mean the little feller."

"Yes. He looks older than me and you and we're bigger than him."

While Jimmy and his companion were talking about Tom and Chick, grown people were reading the sign on the side of the van and making humorous remarks about the outfit.

At length Tom and Chick finished their dinner and came outside.

"Are you the chap who buys everything?" asked one of the wags of the village, with a grin, of Tom.

"I am," replied the young trader, looking him squarely in the eye. "If you're for sale, I'm afraid I couldn't give much for you, but I'll set a figure if you say so."

The laugh was turned on the village humorist and he got very indignant.

"Do you mean to insult me?" he demanded angrily.

"Insult you! Why, you asked me a question and I answered you," replied Tom.

"You gave me an important answer, and I'd be justified in taking you into the street, you common fellow," snorted the other.

"You're at liberty to try it, if you think you're man enough to do it," replied Tom coolly.

"I wouldn't soil my hands touching you," answered the wag loftily.

"Very considerate on your part," replied Tom sarcastically.

The young man who prided himself on his wit turned away with a look of disdain and got out of the way as soon as he could escape the snickers of those who knew him and were enjoying his discomfiture.

Chick had already mounted to his seat and Tom now followed him and drove off toward the cottage section, where he spent the whole afternoon making trades here and there along the route.

As soon as it began to grow dark they returned to the restaurant and had their supper, and then Tom drove to a vacant spot of ground on the outskirts of the village close to a small manufacturing establishment, and roosted there for the night.

CHAPTER IX.

TOM IS TREATED TO A SURPRISE.

On the following morning, which was Saturday, the boys got their own breakfast with the help of the oil stove.

"Now, Chick, we'll unload and rearrange the stuff I bought in this week," said Tom to his assistant after they had cleaned up their breakfast table. "We'll reach Exeter this afternoon. It's a big town and I may find a chance to dispose of some of my stuff, so I've got to put things in shape."

Half the merchandise in the wagon was pulled out on the ground.

All the old paper was tied up in handy-sized bundles.

The magazines and story-papers were sorted out and tied in piles.

The old metal was put together in separate boxes.

Then they got the mattress frames down from the roof of the van and attached the copper and brass springs from them, putting them in another box.

The hammock was taken apart, tied up in a bundle and returned to the top of the wagon.

The parrot cage Tom had got for a dime was cleaned up till its inner parts shone like new, and the young trader figured that it ought to fetch \$1.

The rusty stove was taken from under the van, cleaned and polished, and then returned to its place again.

By the time the boys were ready for dinner everything was ship-shape and in order.

Some of the factory hands on their way to their dinner stopped and viewed the van with a lot of curiosity.

The bundles of magazines and story-papers attracted the attention of several.

"Want to sell any of them things cheap?" asked a man, pointing at the bundles.

"Sure," replied Tom. "That bundle of magazines is complete from January to December. You can have it for half a dollar. Those in that bundle are different kinds of magazines in first-class condition, three for ten cents. Those in that bundle you can have at two for a nickel. The story-papers go for a cent a copy."

The man bought the complete bundle and went off with it.

Nearly everybody bought from a nickel to a quarter's worth of the magazines, reducing Tom's supply considerably.

His profit was large because he had bought all of them for waste paper.

The manager of the mill, passing that way while the boys were eating their dinner, was attracted by the parrot cage.

He decided that it was just what he wanted for his mocking bird.

"Want to sell that cage, young man?" he asked Tom.

"Yes, sir."

"What do you ask for it?"

Tom sized him up and thought he could stand \$1.50, so he named that price.

The manager bought it without trying to dicker, and the young trader wrapped it in paper for him.

"You made a good profit on dat cage," grinned Chick.

"Yes, and on the magazines, too," replied Tom. "I didn't expect to sell anything in this village."

"Gee! I'd like to be boss of a business like dis," said Chick.

"Maybe I'll turn it over to you some day when I get hold of something that suits me better."

"Where'd I get the coin to pay for de outfit?" asked Chick.

"I'd trust you for it. I have perfect confidence in your honesty, Chick."

"I'd pay you, all right, if you gave me time enough."

"I'd give you all the time you wanted."

"T'anks. Dere ain't many fellers like you, Tom. I'd hate to leave you even to be boss of my own biz. You've treated me white and you bet I'll never forget it," said Chick emphatically.

Tom said it was time for them to start, so the horses were hitched up and the van started for Exeter, which was only a few miles away.

A mile outside of the town they stopped at a road-house to water the animals.

The boys went to the bar and bought a bottle of soda-water each.

While they were drinking it the proprietor, who was standing on the veranda, noticed Tom's trunk on the vehicle.

When the boys came out he said to Tom:

"I've got some stuff I want to sell. Will you look at it?"

"I will," replied the young trader, who was always ready for business.

The landlord led the way to the storage room at the top of the house.

"Here's a trunk with a lot of clothes that an old man left behind him when he died owing me quite a bill. What will you give for the lot?"

Tom opened the trunk, looked the things over, and named a small price.

"Is that the best you can do?" asked the man.

"Yes. I couldn't get much for them, while the trunk is so old-fashioned that I doubt if I could find a purchaser for it at any price."

The man produced a lot of other things for Tom's inspection, and he made a figure on the batch, which the proprietor, after some haggling, accepted.

Tom paid him, and then with Chick's help carried the stuff to the van.

On entering the town Tom made inquiries for a jack-stone, and finally found one down near the river which flowed by Exeter.

Here he disposed of the bulk of his stuff at a fair profit.

The man bought the trunk he got from the farmhouse, but he wouldn't take the hair trunk Tom bought from the proprietor of the roadhouse.

"You'd better lose that somewhere in the woods," he laughed. "I wouldn't lumber my place up with it."

After dumping the clothes out, for which the boy received

little more than he had given for them he told Chick to return the trunk to the van.

It would be handy to hold stuff in, at any rate.

The stove fetched a profit of about fifty cents, while the wood that had made up the frames of the spring mattresses went for a quarter.

The dealer offered a dollar for the bureau, but Tom declined to sell it at that price.

After leaving the dealer he stopped at a hardware store and bought suitable fancy brass handles for it.

Next they went to the express office and Tom got his C. O. D. box of Popper's World-renowned Liniment.

That finished their business for the day, and they went on to a restaurant and had a good dinner.

Tom then drove out to the railroad yards on the suburbs and located a small field beyond them, where he got permission to stay till Monday.

As it was fenced in, the horses were allowed to roam about on the grass at will.

The van was nearly empty now, so they had abundant room for their mattress.

Chick had noticed that there was a show on at the Opera House that night, so he told Tom that he'd like to go to it.

"Do you think you can find your way back here all right?" asked Tom, as he handed him half a dollar.

"Why not? All I'll have to do is to follow the river out to the railroad yard," replied Chick confidently.

To say the truth, it would be a hard thing for Chick to lose himself anywhere, so Tom had little doubt but he'd turn up in due time.

After Slivers had started for the Opera House, Tom got out his account book and figured up the profits of his trip to date.

He found he had a very comfortable balance in his favor.

When he finished his accounts he shut up the van and crossing the street and the railroad tracks began to saunter along the bank of the river.

It was a very warm night, and the breeze near the water was a grateful relief after the close interior of the wagon.

He proceeded slowly, with no particular object in view, for half a mile, by which time he was well beyond the outskirts of the town, when he saw a scow drawn up beside the bank.

The craft appeared to be deserted, so Tom stepped on board and sat down on the roof of the covered part aft, which answered for a cabin or living quarters for the men who had charge of the scow when in commission.

After sitting there a while he walked forward and leaned over the side of the craft near the bows, watching the slow progress of a freight train on the other side of the river, and the lights of Rivermouth, the big manufacturing town which was connected with Exeter by ferry.

While he stood there in the shadows three men slouched about the scow and made their way into the cabin, where they struck a light and ignited a candle which they stood on a rude table in the center of the place.

One of the men opened a bundle he had brought aboard under his arm.

It contained half a dozen sandwiches and a pie cut into three sections.

He also produced from his hip pocket a large flat black bottle, which he placed near the candle.

Each man helped himself to two sandwiches and a slice of the pie and began to eat like hungry men.

Tom had not heard the men come on the scow, and was not aware of their presence until he turned to return to the van, when he saw the flickering light and the forms of the men in the cabin.

He immediately concluded that the persons belonged to the scow, and as he passed the doorway casually glanced inside.

He stepped short, however, with a gasp of surprise, as he recognized two of the men as Barney Hogan and Jim Rogers, the Woodland burglars, whom he supposed to be in the Exeter county jail.

CHAPTER X.

TOM GETS IN A BAD FIX.

The men did not notice Tom as he looked in at them.

They stood around the table eating voraciously and conversing in low tones.

"It ain't safe for us to stay here," said Barney, reaching

for the flask, which he raised to his lips after unscrewing the stopper. "The moment our escape is discovered the cops will start out to round us up."

"We might be able to steal a ride on that freight train they are makin' up in the yard back there," said the chap Tom did not know.

"It won't do to go back to the yard just on a chance of gettin' into an empty box car and a seat on the bumpers," replied Snuggs. "Some yard man would be sure to see us hangin' around and suspect what we were up to. We must hoof it down the road as soon as we're rested. Maybe we'll find a rowboat somewhere along the river and then we can cross over to the other side."

"I ain't countin' on such luck as that," said Barney. "I figure that we'll have to walk all night, and hido' somewhere soon after daylight."

"We'd better stick to the river on the chance of finding a boat, for it would be much to our advantage to get on the other side as soon as we could," remarked Snuggs. "You see, the police will go to the ferry the first thing to find out if any one seen three chaps of our description go on the boat. The chances are we would have been noticed had we gone across that way, and then the officers on the other side would be notified to look out for us. When the cops find that we weren't seen on the boat they'll figure that we're still on this side, and will hunt for us up and down the river and out along the road. If we could get across on the sly we'd give them the slip."

Snuggs's remarks received favorable consideration, and it was decided to stick to the river.

By this time the men had finished the food and partly emptied the flask.

Tom concluded he had heard enough of their plans to be able to put the police on their trail, so he started to leave the scow.

Unfortunately Barney looked toward the door at that moment and saw his retreating figure.

"There's some one outside watchin' us," he said, in a tone that startled his companions. "He must have heard all we said. We must catch him," and he made a spring for the door.

Snuggs and the other man, whose name was Haskins, followed him.

Tom, unconscious that his presence had been discovered, had reached the bank and was turning away.

The three escaped prisoners rushed after him and were almost on him before he heard their footsteps.

He started to run the moment he saw they were after him, and would probably have made good his escape in the darkness but that he tripped over a rail and fell headlong across the ties.

His head struck the opposite rail and the shock knocked him temporarily unconscious.

The crooks grabbed him, but saw right away that he was insensible.

"He's a boy," said Barney. "Must have got a hard rap to knock him out. What shall we do with him? He's on to us, of course, and as soon as he comes to he'll send word to the police and they'll know the direction we've taken."

"Take him aboard the scow and tie him up in the cabin," suggested Haskins.

"We ain't got nothin' to tie him with," said Barney.

"I saw a piece of rope aboard," replied Haskins.

"Let's see whether he's playin' possum or not," said Snuggs, striking a match and holding it close to Tom's face.

The moment he got a view of the boy's features he dropped the match and uttered an imprecation.

"What's the matter?" asked Barney, who had not identified Tom.

"Do you know who this chap is?" replied Snuggs, in a fierce tone.

"No. How should I?" retorted Barney, emphatically.

"It's the kid who turned the trick on us in Woodland."

"What?" ejaculated Barney, showing sudden interest.

"That pretty boy?"

"The same old fellow."

"Well, I'll be jiggered. How come he to be here?"

"That's more'n I can tell. We can't take no chances with him, I can tell you. He's too dangerous. Come now, help me carry him aboard the scow."

During the transit to the flat-bottomed craft Tom regained his senses.

Realizing that he was in the hands of the crooks, and not in a position to make a break for liberty, he decided that

it would be the part of prudence to keep quiet and pretend to be still unconscious.

The rascals carried him into the cabin and laid him on the floor.

"Get the rope," said Snuggs to Haskins.

The latter fetched it and no time was lost in tying Tom so as to render him helpless.

"I think the best thing we can do, Barney, is to toss him into the river," said Snuggs. "Then we'll get both revenge and safety so far as he's concerned."

"That won't do," objected Haskins. "I won't have no hand in a murder. Leave him here. He's not likely to be found before we're safe off."

"You say that 'cause you haven't any score ag'n him; but Barney and me have. He queered a job of ours and got us jugged. We swore to get square with him some day if we met him ag'n, and now we've got the chance to keep our word."

"I don't care what you've got against him, I won't stand for havin' him done up while I'm around," replied Haskins, decidedly.

"You be blessed!" growled Snuggs. "You ain't got no right to stand between him and us. We're in the same boat and must pull together."

"That's all right; but there's no call to murder the boy."

"Well, you needn't know nothin' about the matter. Barney and me'll attend to him."

"No," said Barney, "I ain't in favor of puttin' him out of the way. I won't put my head in no noose just to get square with him."

Barney's unexpected opposition angered Snuggs, and he abused his associates in round terms.

"I thought you had some backbone," he snarled. "Here's your chance to get back at that kid who's the cause of our bein' in the fix we are. What kind of a lobster are you, anyway?"

"I ain't such a blamed fool as you seem to be," retorted Barney.

"We're only wastin' time scrappin' over the chap," put in Haskins. "We ought to be on our way. Leave the boy here. He can't get away himself, and it isn't likely anybody'll come before Monday. He'll be pretty well starved by that time. That ought to be satisfaction enough for you."

The last part of Haskins's remarks had some effect on Snuggs.

He judged that there was little chance of the scow being visited that night or all day Sunday and Sunday night, with the possibility that no one might even come there on Monday.

It struck him at once that Tom had a good chance of starving to death before any help came to him.

At any rate, the boy, if left there bound hand and foot as he was, would be in a pretty bad pickle, so he suddenly changed front and agreed to fall in with the ideas of his companions.

Harmony was thus restored, Tom was placed in a corner of the cabin, and the men then left the scow and started down the bank of the river, keeping a bright lookout for a boat.

"I guess I've had a narrow escape," thought the young trader when he was the sole occupant of the cabin. "That Snuggs is a mean-minded ruffian. If he had had his way, I'd have been thrown into the river to drown. I'm in a bad enough fix as it is. They tied me good and hard, and I don't see much chance of getting free by my own efforts. Looks as if I was slated to stay here all night, and by morning those rascals will be well on their way to safety. Chick, when he gets back from the show, will wonder where I went to, for he will see the van locked up. He'll sit around expecting me to turn up any moment, and when I don't, he won't know what to make of things. Well, I suppose I might as well take matters coolly, and trust to luck."

Tom tried his best to free himself, but without avail.

The men had made a good job of it, and he was tied to stay so till somebody released him.

Hour after hour passed away and he dozed off to sleep.

Suddenly he was aroused by the flashing of a light in his eyes.

"Hello," exclaimed a man's voice, "what's this?"

Tom looked up and saw a policeman with a dark lantern in his hand.

"Cut me loose, will you please?" he said, eagerly.

"How came you to be in this plight, young man?" asked the officer.

"Three crooks who escaped from the Exeter county jail did me up as you see."

"Oh, ho, so it was them, eh? How long ago is it since you met them?" asked the policeman, kneeling down, drawing out his knife and beginning to cut the rope.

"Well, they nabbed me between nine and ten o'clock," answered Tom. "I've no idea what time it is now. Maybe you know."

"It's a little after midnight," replied the officer, as he severed the last strand that held the boy's legs.

"Thanks, officer," said Tom, getting on his feet. "Are you after the rascals?"

"I am. Two of us are searching this neighborhood for a clue. No one could guess the route taken by the scoundrels. Men have been sent out in all directions to try and find them."

"I can give you a pretty good line on them if they haven't changed their plans after leaving me here."

"Well, where did they go—down the river?"

"Yes; looking for a boat to get across to the other side of the river."

"You say they made a prisoner of you around ten o'clock?"

"Yes."

"Then they have a good two hours' start of us. How came they to bother with you?"

Tom explained how he had discovered the trio in the cabin eating and planning their course of action.

"I had no idea that they saw me outside in the dark," he said. "I knew them and had just started for the freight yards to get somebody there to telephone to the jail when I saw them coming after me. They never would have caught me if I hadn't tripped over the railroad track."

"How is it that you recognized them as having escaped from the jail? By their conversation?"

"No, I was the cause of the capture of two of them—Barney Hogan and Jim Snuggs—after they had entered the residence of George Carr, cashier of the local bank of Woodland, to rob it. I knew them at once, and the fact that they were at large was enough to convince me that they had managed in some way to get out of the jail where I knew they were awaiting their trial. I am the chief witness against them, and because of the part I played in their capture, Snuggs wanted to throw me into the river to-night. Fortunately for me, the other two objected to being mixed up in a murder, and so they left me here in the hope that I wouldn't be discovered before Monday at the earliest."

"It is fortunate for you that we came this way, and a piece of good luck for us that we found you and thus got a clue to the direction taken by the rascals."

At that moment a policeman in plain clothes, a detective officer, stuck his head in at the door and asked the man Tom was talking to what was keeping him.

"Have you got one of them?" he added, seeing Tom's figure in the gloom.

"No, Dan, but I've got evidence that they came this way," replied the policeman. "Come, let us get out of this, young man."

On reaching the second officer's side, Tom was asked to repeat his story for the other's benefit, which he did.

"So, they're trying to make their escape down the river," said the detective. "We have no time to lose, Hinkley, for they have nearly three hours' start of us. Here comes a freight train now. We'll stop it, get aboard, and go on as far as Allentown. We can telephone to headquarters from there, and then start up the river on the chance of meeting the men. I don't think there is much chance of their finding a rowboat to get across the river."

Tom was instructed to report at police headquarters in the forenoon, and he promised to do so.

The officer then signalled the freight engineer.

As soon as the train came to a stop the policemen got into the cab, briefly explained things to the engineer, and then the train started on again.

Tom took the road back to the yards, congratulating himself over his lucky escape from a bad fix, and in about fifteen minutes reached the van, where he found Chick impatiently waiting for him to show up.

CHAPTER XI.

TOM CALLS ON MISS HUTCHINGS.

"Gee, Tom!" exclaimed Chick, "where have you been? It's after one."

"Up the river and in trouble," answered Tom.

"What trouble did you get into?"

"I ran against those two crooks that tried to rob Mr. Carr's house in Woodland."

"How could you when they're in jail?"

"They escaped this evening with another chap and went aboard a scow hauled up to the river bank about half a mile from here."

"You don't say," cried Chick, much astonished.

"I was on the scow at the time taking in the breezes," said Tom, who then went on and told his companion all that had happened to him until he was finally rescued from his predicament by a policeman, one of a pair who were out hunting for the rascals.

"It's a good t'ing dat de cop found you. I never would have known where you was. You might have stayed dere a couple of days wit'out anyt'in' to eat."

"That's right," said Tom, unlocking the doors of the van.

A quarter of an hour later both boys were asleep.

They slept late Sunday morning and got their breakfast in the van.

Leaving Chick in charge of the vehicle, Tom went to police headquarters and reported the events of the night so far as his connection with the escaped prisoners was concerned.

He learned that so far as the authorities were aware, the rascals had not yet been retaken.

On leaving the station-house he went to a restaurant and had dinner, after which he went back to the van.

"Here's half a dollar, Chick," he said. "Go into town and get your dinner. I have had mine."

Chick took the money and departed, but without any intention of spending all the money on a meal.

While his companion was away, Tom passed the time reading the Sunday edition of one of the Riverside papers.

His assistant got back about two o'clock and Tom told him he was going to pay a short call on Miss Hutchings, who he presumed had returned home as she said she was going to.

He inquired his way to Jefferson street, in the residential section of the town, and found it was lined with cottages of the better class, all standing apart in their own grounds.

Following the numbers he came to the Hutchings house where he rang the bell.

A neat looking servant answered his ring.

"Is Miss Hutchings at home?" Tom inquired.

"She is," was the answer.

"Tell her Thomas Trevor would like to see her."

"Walk in, please."

Tom entered and was shown into the parlor.

In a few minutes Miss Hutchings appeared, looking more bewitching than ever.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Trevor," she said, with a beaming smile. "I am delighted to see you."

"The pleasure is mutual, Miss Hutchings," responded Tom, taking her hand.

"It is very kind of you to call."

"I couldn't help it, for you are an attraction I was unable to resist."

"Dear me, are you going to shower compliments on me again? I thought you had exhausted your supply the afternoon we met at Mr. Carr's," she laughed.

"I have a few left," he said, with a smile.

"You boys are such jolliers that one hardly knows how to take you."

"I may do a little jollying in my business, but I wouldn't think of jollying you. It is my intention to speak only the truth in your presence. Now, when I say that, in my opinion, you look even more charming this afternoon, in that new gown which well becomes you, than you did at Woodland, I am only expressing my real sentiments on the subject."

Miss Hutchings blushed and looked pleased.

Say what they will to the contrary, every girl likes to be complimented on her personal appearance, especially by one she is interested in, and Alice Hutchings was more interested in the young trader than she would admit.

"When did you reach Exeter?" she asked.

"Yesterday afternoon."

"How do you like our town?"

"Very much, indeed, as far as I've seen of it. It is quite a flourishing looking place."

"Riverside, across the river, is larger, but it isn't as nice a town by any means. It is chiefly noted for its manufacturing interests. Nearly all the big business people of Riverside live here in Exeter, and go back and forth every

day on the ferry. My father is the president of the ferry, and also of the Exeter National Bank."

Judging from the cottage and its appointments, as well as Mr. Hutchings' importance in the community, Tom figured that his fair hostess was a member of the best society in Exeter, and he felt that she had greatly honored him in receiving him at her home on terms of equality.

He had taken a great fancy to the young lady, but he was afraid that if her father learned that he was only a traveling trader he would not approve of the intimacy.

"Did you hear about the escape from the Exeter jail of those two rascals who tried to rob Mr. Carr's house?"

"Why, yes! it was in the morning's paper. Isn't it too bad they got away?"

"Yes, it is. You will be surprised when I tell you that I ran across them last night along the river below the railroad yards."

"Is it possible!" she exclaimed, with a look of astonishment.

"I'll tell you how it happened," he replied.

Whereupon he described to her how he had met the rascals and fallen into their hands; what they had done to him, and how he had subsequently been rescued by one of the Exeter police force.

She looked startled when Tom described how Snuggs wanted to throw him into the river in order to get him out of the way and be revenged upon him at the same time.

"You had a narrow escape," she said, with some earnestness.

"That's right. If the other two, or even Barney Hogan had been in favor of doing me up that way, there was nothing to prevent them from carrying out their purpose, for the scow is moored at a spot that is very lonesome at night."

"I'm so glad nothing serious happened to you, Mr. Trevor."

"Thank you, Miss Hutchings. It is very kind of you to express your sympathy. Being as I am a rolling stone, without parents or relatives, and nobody but Chick to mourn my loss if I were suddenly removed from this busy world, it is a satisfaction to know that you feel at least a slight interest in my welfare," replied Tom, in a grateful tone.

"I feel more than a slight interest in you, Mr. Trevor," replied the girl, impulsively. "You may be only a traveling trader at present, but I am sure you will not long remain so. I know that you are energetic and ambitious, and to a boy so well endowed as you are, all things are possible."

"I think the compliments are coming from you now, Miss Hutchings," laughed Tom.

"I am only following your example—expressing my real sentiments on the subject," she replied, with a slight blush.

"I accept them as such and thank you for your encouraging words," replied Tom.

After that the fair girl and the enterprising young trader seemed drawn a little closer together in spirit.

Each recognized that a kind of mutual interest existed between them, and in consequence, their bearing to each other unconsciously became more unreserved and friendly.

Tom remained till about five o'clock and then said he guessed it was time for him to go.

"Shall I see you again before you leave town?" Alice asked, with a look that indicated it would give her much pleasure to have him call again.

"I'm afraid not, Miss Hutchings. I shall cross over to Riverside by an early boat in the morning, and continue my way west and south. I trust we shall meet again in the near future, for I will try and return to this town some time, if I have to make a special trip by rail. Your friendship is more to me than perhaps you understand. You have a nice home, parents, a large circle of friends who admire you, while I—well, I am only a bit of flotsam on the world, with my future to make through my own efforts. Your friendship, therefore, is a precious possession to me, and I want to deserve it, and I don't want to lose it. I shall remember your kind words of encouragement, and I shall think of you often as distance lengthens between us. If you would permit me to—"

"Permit you to what, Mr. Trevor?" said the girl, who was deeply moved by the boy's words, as he paused abruptly.

"I was going to ask a favor of you, but I fear I have no right to suggest it," he said, with some slight emotion in his tone.

"I am sure you would not ask any favor I could not willingly grant, so please express it."

"I will do so, and if it be permission on my part, I beg your forgiveness in advance. I was going to say that if

you would permit me to write you once in a while, it would make me very happy."

"You have my permission to do so, Mr. Trevor," she replied, with a smile. "And I promise to answer your letters if you will let me know where an answer is likely to reach you."

"Thank you, Miss Hutchings. I appreciate the favor very much. Any letter you send me will be treasured in remembrance of this afternoon, which I regard as the brightest spot in my life so far. I shall labor harder than ever to be worthy of your friendship, and to show you that I mean to get ahead in the world as fast as it is possible for a boy of my years to do."

"I have no fear about your future," replied the girl, in a tone of earnest conviction. "I am satisfied that the time will come when I shall consider myself fortunate in knowing you. I foresee that you will make your mark in some way, for, in my opinion, you are one boy in a thousand."

"I thank you again for your generous appreciation of me, and now wish you good-by, trusting that we shall meet again before a great while."

Tom put out his hand and she placed hers in his.

"Good-by, Mr. Trevor," she said. "Be sure that I will not forget you."

He bowed courteously to her, and the next moment he was outside.

He turned at the gate and saw her still standing at the door.

He waved his hand and she returned the salute with a smile.

Then Tom walked up the street, and Alice went to her room conscious that something new and sweet had come into her life which made her feel very happy.

CHAPTER XII.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH TRAMPS.

Tom and Chick were astir soon after daylight.

The horses were hitched up and they drove toward the ferry-house.

Within a block of the river they stopped at a small restaurant for breakfast, then they were aboard the boat which was about ready to start.

A few minutes sufficed to land them at the wharf on the other side of the river, and from that point they proceeded through the business section of Riverside.

Tom stopped at a wholesale tinware establishment to renew his depleted stock of articles most in demand among the farmers' wives; and then went to a jobbing dry goods house where he bought a supply of the notions he needed.

There being nothing else to detain him in town, he started on and soon was on the county road with his horses' heads pointed to the southeast.

He did some business along his route that day, and at nightfall camped near a cross roads.

"Dis here is what I call de life for me," said Chick, as they squatted on the grass after supper, and Slivers brought forth a of cigarette from a pack in his pocket. "Most fellers dat's used to de city like me, wouldn't come out into de country for a gold mine. I was radder homesick at fust, as you know; but now it's different. I'm satisfied if I'm in town once in a while where I kin go to a show."

"You're looking a whole lot healthier since you've been out with me, Chick," replied Tom, "though you're a tough nut, any way, and it would take a great deal to knock you out even if you had stayed in Chicago."

"Bet your life it would," grinned the boy. "But I feel like a fightin'-cock since I've been travelin' in dat waggin. I'll bet I could lick any two boys my size now and come up to de scratch smilin'."

Chick blew out several rings of blue smoke and watched them circle above his head.

It was dark by this time, but the sky was bright with stars, and they could easily see up and down the road for some little distance.

There was scarcely any breeze, so that the tiniest branches on the trees stood motionless in the air.

But for the noises of the frogs and divers nocturnal insects there would have been absolute silence over the face of nature.

As Chick tossed the butt of his cigarette away and got

up to stretch himself, he saw two men coming slowly toward them along the road.

The boy called Tom's attention to them and then hopped up on the rear of the van where he sat down, allowing his legs to swing under him.

When the newcomers got close it was seen that they belonged to the hobo fraternity, and pretty tough specimens they were.

Each of them had an empty tomato can slung over his shoulder, and carried a cudgel in his hand.

They saw the wagon and walked toward it.

"Hello, matey," said one, stopping in front of Tom, "got somethin' good to eat in yer outfit?"

"Hungry, are you?" answered Tom.

"I reckon we are. If ye've got any licker we'll take that fust."

"Don't carry anything of that kind."

"Why don't yer?" asked the fellow, in an impudent tone.

"Because I don't," replied Tom, coolly.

"Don't get sassy, young feller, or I'll bust yer in the snoot."

"Maybe you will, but I doubt it. If you expect me to give you anything to eat, you've got to be civil."

"Hear the little cock crow!" said the tramp, sarcastically. "Jest yer hand out a supply of yer eatables or we'll step aboard and help ourselves."

"If that's the way you talk, you won't get anything from me."

"Yer do what I tell yer, or I'll knock yer block off," said the tramp, raising his cudgel in a threatening way.

Chick saw there was going to be trouble, so he darted back into the van for the six-shooter.

The second tramp, seeing him retreat, decided to follow. Tom sprang forward, seized the cudgel held by the first tramp and wrenched it from his grasp.

"Now you get out quick," he said, in a resolute tone.

The tramp, with a snarl of rage, stuck his hand into his shirt and drew out a wicked-looking knife, the blade of which glinted in the starlight.

"I'll carve yer up," he roared, preparing to make a lunge with the weapon at Tom.

The boy was too quick for him.

He brought the knotty end of the cudgel down on his wrist, and the knife fell to the grass.

The tramp uttered a howl of mingled anger and pain.

A different kind of a howl came from the other tramp.

He was in the act of clambering into the van when Chick jabbed the revolver in his face and said tersely, "Git."

He "got" quick, tumbling backward on to the grass.

Tom stepped forward and put his foot on the knife so that the tramp could not recover it.

Then he swung the cudgel so close to the fellow's face that he hopped back and tripped over his companion.

The ragged and disreputable pair got badly tangled up in their efforts to rise, and they filled the air with their imprecations.

Tom picked up the knife and tossed it to Chick.

Then he waited for the men to get on their feet.

As soon as they did, he ordered them to get away at once.

They stood and glared at him, apparently disinclined to obey.

At that moment Chick accidentally pressed the trigger of the revolver.

There was a sharp report and the bullet whizzed between the heads of the two tramps.

That was more than they bargained for.

They were impressed with the idea that Chick had intended to shoot them.

They were panic-struck and took to their heels at once.

Chick uttered a shout of glee, sprang to the ground, and sent another bullet after them, taking care that it would pass over their heads.

"Great Scott, Chick!" cried Tom. "You've hit one of them."

One of the tramps had tumbled over into the road.

He scrambled on his feet again in a hurry and followed after his companion as hard as he could put.

Tom was relieved to find that the fall had come from the rascal's fright and not from the leaden messenger.

Chick whooped things up with howls of satisfaction, and sent a third shot after the retreating hobos.

"I'll bet dat dey won't forget dis performance for a month," he said.

Nothing would have pleased him better than to have rushed after the rascals and discharged the remaining chambers of the weapon, but he guessed that Tom would not approve of such a proceeding, and he never did anything that Tom didn't like if he could help it.

"We have taught them a lesson, I hope," replied the young trader. "Perhaps they won't be in such a hurry after this to bulldoze persons they happen to come across."

"Gee! How dey did run, especially de big fellow dat got de tumble in de dust," chuckled Chick. "It was better dan a circus to watch 'em."

"You gave them a terrible shock when you fired that gun the first time. The bullet must have sung between their ears. That certainly started them on the go."

"I didn't mean to shoot dat time. De revolver went off before I knew what was goin' to happen. Dey was lucky to get off wit'out a bullet," said Chick.

"I thought you shot on purpose to frighten them," replied Tom, a bit surprised.

"Nope. It was an accident, but it did de business all right. Dey started, bet your boots. Den I fired to make 'em go faster. What a nerve dat feller had to order you to fetch him somet'in' to eat, just as if he was some big rooster wit' lots of money, and you was his nigger waiter. If dey'd behaved demselves dey'd have got some grub, now dey'll have to go hungry, which serves dem right."

"Well, it's time we turned in, Chick," said Tom. "Hand me the lantern and I'll stick it up at the corner of the van."

A few minutes later, with the door partly closed and secured by the chain, they lay down to rest and were soon asleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER.

A week later they entered a good-sized city on their route and put up over Sunday on a vacant lot where other vehicles were stored.

The horses were lodged in a cheap stable attached to the lot.

Tom and Chick went to a cheap hotel and registered.

After supper, Tom went to the reading-room and wrote a fairly long letter to Alice Hutchings, detailing his adventures during the week, and directing her to address him at a certain town he expected to reach a week later.

On Monday morning Tom sold the greater part of his purchases at a junk store.

Then he visited several second-hand stores to try and sell the bureau.

The best offer he could get was \$2.75, and as he considered it worth a good deal more than that, he kept it in the wagon.

Two days afterward he entered a small village in the next State about dark.

His outfit attracted a lot of attention when it halted before the small hotel.

Tom let the mob gape, and entering the main room of the hotel, inquired what it would cost for two suppers.

He was told fifty cents.

That was satisfactory, so the young trader and his assistant adjourned to the dining-room, where they got steak, potatoes, hot rolls, prunes and coffee.

When the boys reached the veranda facing on the street again, they found the van still an object of curiosity to the villagers.

They mounted on the front seat and drove off.

Tom hauled up at a general store and went in to purchase sundry provisions, such as butter, eggs, etc., for his larder.

The butter he put into a covered stone crock which he placed in a pail of cold water to keep as cool as possible.

They passed the night on the outskirts of the village, and started on again immediately after breakfast.

On the following Saturday they reached the town of Essex, where Tom had told Miss Hutchings a letter would reach him.

He halted the van in front of the post-office, and, going to the general delivery window, asked the man if there was a letter for Thomas Trevor.

The clerk pulled a small bunch of letters out of the "T" pigeon-hole and began sorting them over.

Tom watched him with a beating heart and eager look.

His heart gave a great jump as the clerk tossed a letter to him and put the others back into their receptacle.

He picked it up and saw that it was addressed in a feminine hand, and of course it came from Miss Hutchings.

He placed it in his pocket, as carefully as if it contained a \$1,000 bill, and returned to his perch on the wagon.

Then they took their supper at a restaurant and then kept on out of town.

It was dark by the time they found a suitable spot along the county road to haul up for the night.

The horses were released and tethered by their long ropes, the lantern lit and hung up outside the van, while the reflector lamp was turned on inside by Tom so he could read his precious letter.

Slicing open the envelope carefully with his penknife, Tom pulled out the enclosure which bore a slight perfume suggestive of a lady's boudoir.

It began: "Dear Mr. Trevor. I received your delightful and very welcome letter, dated July 18th, and mailed from Dayton, and I read and re-read it with feelings of great pleasure. I will now keep my promise to you and answer it, though I cannot promise that my poor efforts will be as interesting to you as your splendid letter was to me. Your adventure with the two tramps gave me quite a thrill, and I shudder to think how you might have been stabbed by that ruffian who attacked you," etc.

The letter was full of a kindly personal interest to Tom, and its perusal made him very happy indeed.

He read it through three times before finally returning it to his pocket, and while he was thus occupied, Chick sat on the end of the van.

Tom turned out the lamp and told Chick that he was going to walk up the road a bit to stretch his legs.

"You can come if you want to," he said.

"Nope," replied Chick, "dis is good enough for me."

So Tom started up the lonesome road alone.

The road swung around a short distance ahead and the light of the van lantern vanished behind him.

Tom was rather pleased to be alone, as he wanted to commune with himself over the contents of Alice Hutchings's letter.

Its tone and words were very satisfactory to him; so much so, indeed, that he began building castles in the air in which the girl was a very important element.

Lost in delightful visions of the future, Tom was hardly aware that he was approaching a railroad crossing.

Between him and the tracks stood an old and dilapidated story-and-a-half shanty, fronting on the road.

As Tom approached it, a light suddenly flashed from one of the side windows, and its gleam attracted the boy's attention, he woke up from his airy dreams.

The heat of the night had made Tom thirsty and he thought he would stop at the house, ask for a dipper of water and then retrace his steps to the van, which was something less than half a mile in his rear now.

A weather-worn picket fence, much dilapidated, separated the house from the road and also enclosed it with a weed-grown yard on the sides and rear.

The place didn't present a very encouraging aspect as Tom stopped in front of the gate which was open, and hung on one hinge.

He walked up to the door and raised his hand to knock when it was suddenly opened in his face and two men filled the opening.

They started back in a kind of consternation, as if his presence had startled them, and for a moment seemed undecided whether to retreat or not.

As the night was not a dark one, there was light enough for Tom to see the faces of the men quite distinctly, and for them to get a fair view of his features.

There was mutual recognition in the looks that passed between them.

Tom saw before him Jim Snuggs and Barney Hogan, the escaped crooks, and they appeared to be much the worse after their tramp from Exeter.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE WATCH.

"So, it's you," said Snuggs in an ugly tone, glaring at the young trader.

Tom made no answer to this unfriendly salutation.

"I thought we'd fixed you up so you wouldn't bother us again in a hurry, but it seems you are always bickin' up when we don't want you around," continued the crook.

"You needn't worry about me," replied Tom, coolly. "This meeting is as much a surprise to me as it is to you chaps."

"Oh, is it?" sneered Snuggs. "Why were you spying around this door if you didn't know we was here?" he added suspiciously.

"I wasn't spying. I saw a light in the window of this house and I stopped to get a dipper of water."

"Don't lie now. You have been drinkin' water in your van, haven't you?"

"I have told you the truth, but if you won't believe me, it won't worry me any. I'll go back to the van and get a drink there," replied Tom, turning away from them.

"Hold on. We don't part company so easily as all that," said Snuggs, reaching out and grabbing him by the arm. "This business has got to be settled between us."

"Let go of me," cried Tom, tugging to free himself.

"Lay hold of him, Barney, and drag him into the house," said Snuggs.

The other crook obeyed, and Tom presently found himself a prisoner inside of the tenantless shanty.

"Now, you young spy, we're goin' to fix you for keeps this time," gritted Snuggs. "You've got into the habit of followin' us up, no matter where we go, and it's goin' to be stopped, d'ye understand?"

"I don't see any use of arguing with you, since you won't believe what I tell you," replied Tom.

"No, there ain't no use. We've cut our eye teeth, and we ain't such fools as to swallow the soft soap that comes out of your mouth. We've taken all the chances with you we intend to. Now we've got you dead to rights, we'll fix you so you won't have the chance to spy on us no more," said Snuggs, grimly.

So summoning all his courage for a big effort, Tom suddenly wrenched himself free from the rascals and sprang for the door.

The boy yanked the door open just far enough to allow him to get through, and then slammed it in their faces.

When they got outside Tom was in the road, making tracks for the van.

They chased him for a short distance, but seeing that he outstripped them, they gave up the pursuit, seeing which the young trader slackened his gait.

On reaching the van he told Chick about his encounter with the crooks.

"We'll have to keep watch to-night by turns," replied Tom. "It wouldn't be safe for us to take any chances while those chaps are so near."

"Dat's right. Which of us will keep de fust watch?"

"I guess you'd better. If they make up their minds to try to steal a march on me, they probably won't do it for two or three hours yet. They may even wait till the early hours of the morning so as to make sure we're sound asleep."

"I t'ink de best way for me to do is to hide in de bushes behind de fence, and keep my eye on de road and de van. Den dey can't sneak up wit'out I see dem."

Chick took the revolver, fully loaded once more, jumped out of the van and got out of sight behind the fence, while Tom partly closed the doors and secured them with the chain.

When the two rascals gave up the chase of Tom, they held a consultation.

"He's the slickest monkey I ever ran across," growled Snuggs.

"He is that," nodded Barney.

"He'll give us away at the next village, as sure as thunder."

They walked back to the house and spent the next three hours playing cards and emptying the contents of a flask of whisky.

It was midnight when they left the house and took their way down the road intent on wreaking vengeance on Tom Trevor.

About the same time Tom relieved the watchful Chick, and the tough lad got into the van, fastened the doors on the chain, turned in on the mattress and was soon fast asleep.

Tom crept down in the bushes and kept his eyes on the road in the direction of the shanty and the railroad.

He had been there about twenty minutes when he saw two figures come in sight around the turn in the road.

"I'll bet that's the rascals," he muttered. "I'm going to give them the arse of their lives."

It wasn't very long before the men were so close that Tom was sure of their identity, and then he prepared for action.

As soon as Snuggs and Barney made out the form of the van drawn up close to the fence, they left the road and got into the same field where Tom was.

The young trader observed this flank move on their part and drew further back into the shrubbery.

They came on with due caution until they got opposite the van, when they paused and reconnoitered it.

The crooks got over the fence and approached the wagon in a careful way.

Snuggs first peered through the narrow opening between the doors, but he couldn't make out much, for it was very dark inside.

Then he put up his hands thinking to open the doors, and discovered, to his disgust, that they were secured by a chain which prevented them from opening more than an inch except at the bottom and top.

He tried to reach the chain by putting his arm up under the doors as far as he could reach, but failed to touch it.

Here was an obstacle they had not figured on, and it appeared to be insurmountable.

They mounted to the wagon seat, saw the outline of the flap covering the shelf on which Tom kept his stock of notions, and tried to pry it open with a jack-knife, but without the faintest result.

They were at the end of their rope and did not know what to do to accomplish their purpose.

There was a lot of brush in the field and, gathering an armful each, they carried it to the wagon and heaped it under it.

Tom at once surmised their object and prepared to defeat it.

CHAPTER XV.

A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY.

The crooks went back to the field and brought two more armfuls of brush.

Snuggs had part of a newspaper in his pocket, and he made it into a kind of torch, the end of which he ignited with a match.

He swung it around in the air, till it burned smartly and then walked to the van.

As he put one hand on the front wheel and bent down, Tom who had crept up as near as he could behind the fence, took aim at his hand and fired.

A roar of pain came from Snuggs, and the burning newspaper fell to the grass.

Barney turned around, startled almost out of his wits.

The report of the revolver awakened Chick, and he looked out of the van door.

"Hands up, you rascals!" cried Tom, climbing over the fence. "I've got you where the hair is short. Back up against that van, or there'll be trouble to burn for you chaps. Bring some rope, Chick," he said, "and tie these chaps."

Barney was secured first without any great trouble, for he was cowed by the weapon in the young trader's hands.

It was different with Snuggs.

He resisted Chick's efforts to bind him, in spite of Tom's threat to shoot him, so that the latter was obliged to help his assistant out by laying hold of the rascal himself.

Snuggs struggled desperately against them both, but Tom was strong and tough.

He tripped the crook over on the grass and held him down while Chick bound his arms tightly to his side.

Both men were then tied to separate posts and left to pass the night as best they could.

In the morning they were loaded into the van like so much merchandise, and Tom told Chick to remain with them and keep an eye upon them.

The young trader cut out business that morning and drove at his best speed to the town of Darien, some ten miles distant.

Inquiring his way to police headquarters, he stopped in front of the building and reported to the chief that he had two crooks in his van who had escaped from the Exeter jail about two weeks before.

The police chief communicated with the police department of Exeter by 'phone and satisfied himself that the statement made by the young trader was correct in every particular, so the prisoners were jailed.

After getting their dinner at a restaurant, Tom and Chick

proceeded on their way out into the rural districts once more.

One day, the van was overtaken by a heavy thunderstorm on a lonesome stretch of road, but fortunately Tom was able to reach a deserted house with a barn behind that stood not far from the road before the storm actually burst in their vicinity.

He drove the horses and van into the barn just in time to escape the deluge of rain which came on the heels of the sweeping wind.

While the storm was at its height, a thunderbolt struck the deserted building a few yards away with a crash that fairly stunned the boys for some moments.

The storm continued about fifteen minutes more, and then the worst of it was over in that neighborhood.

Tom, however, was in no hurry to make a start.

After the lapse of another half hour, he and Chick sallied forth to look more closely at the ruins of the old house.

The thunderbolt had torn a gaping rent in one end of the building, from roof to cellar, and Tom stepped inside the lower floor.

As Tom gazed on the wreck, he noticed something bright shining up through a mass of demoralized brick.

Curious to know what it was, he began to toss the bricks this way and that in an effort to get a better view of it.

It wasn't long before he saw that it was a japanned tin box.

Eager to see if it contained anything of value, he redoubled his efforts until he finally reached and pulled it out of the ruins.

It was locked, and not so very heavy.

At that moment Chick, who had not ventured in for fear the building would fall upon him, mustered up courage enough to follow his young boss.

"What you got dere, Tom?" he asked, seeing the tin box in the young trader's hands. "A tin box, eh? Where did you find it?"

"In the wreck of the chimney."

"Dere might be somet'in' of value in it, what do you t'ink?"

"I couldn't say, Chick, as it's locked."

"Smash it open, den, wit' a brick."

"No, it's a nice box and I wouldn't like to spoil its usefulness. I might be able to open it with some of my tools."

"Maybe it's full of money," said Chick, gazing at it in a greedy way.

"More likely it holds documents of no value except to the man who owned them."

"Dat would be a shame. It ought to be full of money and den you'd be rich."

"I don't expect to get rich as quick as all that, though I hope to be well off in the course of time."

"Dere ain't no doubt in my mind but you'll have loads of money one of dese days," said Chick, nodding his head in a sage way. "You've done mighty well on dis trip so far, and dere ain't no reason dat I kin see why you shouldn't keep de good work up right along."

"Well, the storm is over and I don't believe there is anything worth seeing in this old house, so we'll return to the barn and get the team out."

Chick had no further curiosity to investigate the house, so he preceded Tom into the open air.

As soon as the van was out of the barn and ready to proceed, Tom got a hammer and a small cold chisel and commenced operations on the tin box.

Chick held it while Tom hammered at the lock.

Tom's object was to break the lock without disfiguring the box any more than he could help.

After pottering at it for some little time, he succeeded in smashing the lock.

Putting down the tools, he pulled up the cover.

Part of an old newspaper was the first thing that met his eyes.

Removing that, he uttered a gasp of astonishment, and so did Chick.

The tin box was crammed full of American bank notes, all of them comparatively new, and showing very little use.

CHAPTER XVI:

CONCLUSION.

"Geel! Talk about de Count of Monte Cristo, he ain't in it wid' you," cried Chick.

"Don't talk nonsense, Chick. There may not be over a couple of thousand dollars here when we count it."

"A couple of t'ousand!" ejaculated the tough kid. "Go on, you're kiddin' me. Look at dat bunch of tens. Dere must be a t'ousand in dat alone."

"Maybe they're not all tens."

"Dat's right. Der might be some twenties, and fifties, and hundreds in it, and den dere'd be more'n a t'ousand in de bunch. Go ahead and count de treasure. I want to know how much you'er wort'. If you t'ink dere's too much for you to handle, den you kin turn what you don't want over to me, and I'll open a bank somewhere, and buy an automobile, a steam yacht, a big house, and a few udder t'ings like dat. Oh, mamma! Wouldn't I be a high roller! Oh, no; of course not," and Chick grinned all over his tough freckled face.

Tom, who was just as desirous as Chick to know how much money there was in the tin box, proceeded to count it slowly and carefully.

One thousand was soon reached and the pile seemed scarcely diminished.

"Bet you a nickel dere's twenty t'ousand dere," said Chick, with a knowing expression.

"I'll take you, Chick."

"Make it a dime."

"You seem confident o' winning?"

"Bet your life I am. Do you raise de ante?"

"Sure. The bet is a dime, and you're going to lose."

"Bet you another dime dat I don't lose," said Chick, promptly.

"Say, do you want to go broke?" laughed Tom, laying the second thousand aside.

"Don't you worry 'bout me goin' broke. I've got more money in my jeans dan you t'ink. Is dat a bet, too?"

"No, I don't want to rob you."

"Aw, where's your sportin' blood? Come up wit' your ten like a little man."

"There it is. Now give me a rest till I get through counting."

There was still a number of bills of large denomination in the box when Tom announced the twentieth thousand and Chick swept the stakes into his pocket.

Altogether, Tom's find footed up close on to \$30,000.

"Nobody kin say you ain't rich now," said Chick.

"But this money doesn't belong to me, Chick," replied Tom.

"It don't? Who else does it belong to, den?"

"The person who owns this property."

"What you talkin' about? You found it, and findin's is keepin's."

"Sometimes, but not always. I must make inquiries about the people who lived here, and try and find out whether I would have a right to any part of the money under the circumstances."

"You're de doctor; but I'll bet if anybody else found dat tin case of bills, he'd keep it wit'out wastin' any breath on de subject."

Tom didn't care to argue the matter, so he stowed the box of money carefully away in the wagon and drove on up the road.

About sundown they saw a farmhouse in the near distance and Tom made his way there.

He told the woman he'd like to make a trade in notions for supper for himself and his companion.

The woman jumped at the offer and told them to sit right down at the table, as the meal was all ready to be served up.

During the supper Tom asked for information about the owners of the old house down the road.

"Nobody owns the place. It is to be sold for unpaid taxes soon," said the woman's husband.

"'Cause the owner died over ten years ago. Everybody believed he was worth a lot of money, but when he died hardly a cent was found in the house. He was an old chap who had outlived all his relatives, so there was no claimant for the property. It will go to the highest bidder when it comes under the hammer, and somebody will get a bargain."

Chick grinned at Tom, as much as to say, findings is keepings in this case sure.

After the meal Tom paid the woman for their supper in ribbons, thread, and such things, which she wanted.

He also traded some tinware for a batch of papers and old clothes.

Then he obtained permission to camp out in the field near the house all night.

Next morning he and Chick continued on their route.

"I'm satisfied now that I have a good right to the money

in the tin box," he said to his companion, "and so I'm going to keep it and give up the trading business for something that has a future in it. I have an idea I'll locate in Exeter, and I hope you'll stick to me just the same."

"Bet your life I will. I wouldn't lose you for not'in'," replied Chick, in an earnest tone.

So they went on, Tom outlining his plans for getting on in the world and Chick listened eagerly to all he said.

They reached a small city two days later and there Tom found two letters awaiting him at the post-office.

One was from Alice Hutchings, and the other was from the police department of Exeter notifying him to appear in town on a certain near date to testify against Jim Snuggs and Barney Hogan.

Tom then decided to sell his outfit and give up his trademark of "Trading Tom" for good and all, though it was not without some regret that he relinquished the business in which he had found both pleasure and profit.

But he knew he was adapted to something better, and now that he had a bunch of money at his back, he felt that he was in a position to give his ambitious dreams full swing.

He selected Exeter as the scene of his future efforts for two reasons—it was a thriving little town for one thing, and for another, Alice Hutchings lived there, and he wanted to be within visiting distance of her.

So next day he advertised his van and horses for sale, and soon found a purchaser who wanted to use the outfit for the express business.

As soon as the bargain was concluded, and the money paid over, Tom and Chick took a train back to Exeter.

On their arrival they put up at a second-class hotel, a very respectable house.

Both boys were fitted out in new clothes, and would scarcely have been recognized by any one who had known them as Trading Tom and his assistant.

Tom called first on the police and then paid a visit to Alice Hutchings, who was delighted to see him again.

He told her about the money he had found, and how it

was his intention to stay at Exeter and make the town his future scene of action.

"I will introduce you to my father," she said, happy that Tom was going to remain in Exeter, "and you can talk with him about your plans. He will advise and help you all he can to oblige me."

A week later the trial of the two crooks came off, and they were easily convicted.

They got the limit, and were sent to the State prison at once, where they still are working out their time.

Mr. Hutchings, after a long and confidential talk with Tom, to whom he took an immediate fancy, offered him an opening in his bank, and advised him to invest his money in gilt-edged securities.

Tom gladly accepted the banker's offer and also his suggestion.

He secured Chick a position as office boy in a wholesale house, where he had opportunities for advancement.

To-day Chick is one of the best salesmen of the house, and no one to look at him would think he was once a tough boy who handled the English language very carelessly.

Tom is cashier of the Exeter National Bank, and is engaged to be married to Alice Hutchings, with her parents' full consent.

He is worth about \$50,000, and a part of this he is expending in a new cottage in which to place his lovely bride-to-be.

And now, having finished our story, we will take leave of the bright and ambitious young man once known through the western rural districts as "Trading Tom—the Boy who Bought Everything."

Next week's issue will contain "FAVORED BY FORTUNE; OR, THE YOUNGEST FIRM IN WALL STREET."

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TAKING LIBERTY LOAN BONDS IN TRADE.

"I hope that the merchants of the country, upon a more careful consideration of the subject, will discontinue their efforts to sell merchandise and take Liberty Loan Bonds in payment," says Secretary McAdoo.

The Secretary states that he has no doubt that merchants offering to take Liberty Loan Bonds in exchange for merchandise are actuated by patriotic motives, but that such transactions tend to defeat a primary object of the bond sales, as they discourage thrift and increase expenditures. Bonds so taken in exchange in most cases are immediately sold in the open market, which tends to suppress the market price and adversely affects sales of future issues.

The strongest efforts are made by the Treasury Department to have these Government bonds purchased for permanent investment by the people and paid for out of savings, thus not only providing funds for the Government but effecting conservation of labor and material; exchanging them for merchandise therefore defeats this purpose.

FROM THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE.

"What deductions are allowed a farmer for 'business expenses' in making out his income-tax return?"

This is one of the many questions which revenue officers who will visit every county in the United States during January and February will answer in detail. Briefly, they include the amount expended for labor in the preparation of land for crops and in the cultivation, harvesting, and marketing of the crop. Deductions may be made for the cost of seed and fertilizer, the amount expended for labor in caring for live stock, cost of feed, repairs to farm and other farm buildings, but not the cost of repairs to the dwelling. The cost of repairs to farm fences and machinery is deductible, as well as the cost of small tools and material which is used up in the course of a year or two, such as binding twine, pitchforks, spades, etc.

The cost of machinery, such as tractors and thrashing machines, can not be deducted, but the cost of their operation is a deductible item.

The value of farm products is not considered taxable until reduced to cash or its equivalent. If crops and stocks were produced in 1916 and sold in 1917, the amount received therefor is to be included in the farmer's tax return for the calendar year 1917. Crops produced in 1917 and on hand

December 31 need not be considered. Persons in doubt as to any of the provisions of the income-tax section of the war-revenue act are advised by the Bureau of Internal Revenue to see the revenue officer who will visit their county to assist taxpayers in making out their returns, which must be filed on or before March 1, 1918.

HARVEST NATURAL ICE, URGES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Farmers and others who harvest natural ice this winter and store it for summer use will aid greatly in the conservation of ammonia, vitally important at this time, it is pointed out by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Ammonia is a necessity in the manufacture of ice. Every ton of natural ice harvested means a certain amount of ammonia saved. Ammonia salts are regarded as an essential in the manufacture of certain fertilizers. The most important chemicals used in making ammonium nitrate and other explosives are readily made from ammonia and every quart of America's already small supply of this substance that can be saved means more power to America's armies. Thus the farmer is interested in the conservation of ammonia not only from a national standpoint, but because of his personal interests. Ammonia saved through harvesting of natural ice means more ammonia for fertilizers and more ammonia for ammunition. The man who harvests ice now and stores it in pits or ice houses, next summer may have the satisfaction of helping out his neighbor who depended on an ice plant.

In addition to the saving of ammonia, conservation of coal is to be effected through the harvesting of natural ice. American ice factories and refrigerating plants, according to figures of the United States Fuel Administration, use annually 15,000,000 tons of coal.

ROCKEFELLER GIVES \$25,000.

William Rockefeller has just made a gift of \$25,000 worth of the last issue of Liberty bonds to the Ossining, N. Y., Hospital to endow a "Mr. and Mrs. William Rockefeller Fund" for the institution.

The bonds will yield \$1,000 a year. It is understood that Dr. Joel Madden, of Ossining, who is physician to the Rockefeller family when they are at their Summer place, interested Mr. Rockefeller after the latter had visited his housekeeper while she was ill in the institution. It is in appreciation of what the hospital attendants did for her that Mr. Rockefeller made the gift.

TWO FOR A CENT

—OR—

THE CHEAPEST BOY ON EARTH

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY.)

CHAPTER XIX (Continued).

He was a shrewd-looking man of about forty, stocky and short, and with eyes whose gaze shifted a good deal.

He ordered one of his men to bring the pair of grays out.

Both Milt and Chub felt a thrill of admiration when they saw the splendid pair, hitched to a light road wagon.

"Jump in with me, and go a bit behind them," invited Mowbray.

"Just a few minutes. I want to look them over first," Milt rejoined.

He looked over every point of both animals. He even looked over points that are not familiar to horsemen. This part was a bluff, but it had Mowbray puzzled.

"The judge may be a fine lawyer, but he doesn't know much about horses," muttered Milt, at last, in a low voice to Chub.

Low as the tone was, Mowbray caught it, as our hero intended he should.

"What's that?" he asked, sharply.

"I was speaking to my friend," smiled Milt. "Well, I'm ready to take a short spin with you now, if you feel that the horses are up to their best work."

Mowbray got into the wagon a bit sulkily, Milt taking a seat beside him. The animals proved to be a magnificent pair of pacers.

"Now, as to price," began Milt, as they drove into the yard again, and sat in the wagon.

"Why, the judge knows that now," exclaimed Mowbray. "Twenty-four hundred—not a cent less."

"Then all I have to say," rejoined Milt, "is that Judge Hepworth will not consider these horses again at any price whatever. I am his agent to buy a matched pair of horses for him, and I shall have them before the day is over. If you won't take a good deal less than you've named, there is not any use at all in my staying here any longer."

"I won't take less," said Mowbray, with emphasis.

"Then I thank you for your attention, and will say good-bye," rejoined Bradlock, leaping lightly to the ground. He turned to Chub, and the two started to walk away.

"What will the judge offer to-day?" asked Mowbray. This was his first sign of weakness.

"Just fourteen hundred dollars," Milt answered.

"Humph! The judge offered me sixteen hundred himself the other day."

"He won't now, when he hears my report," our hero answered. "In fact, he won't consider the matter with you any further at all. He has promised me that."

"If you want to say twenty-two hundred——"

"I don't," Milt cut in, shortly. "Fourteen—not even fourteen and a quarter."

"But that would be crazy on my part," cried Mowbray. "But I will say twenty-one, since the judge wants the critters so badly."

"He won't want them a cent worse than fourteen hundred," retorted our hero. "In fact, once I'm outside this gate, he won't consider the pair even at fifty. I believe he told you over the phone that I have full charge of this matter. Before you hear from the judge again he'll have a pair and won't want these."

"I'll ask him over the wire myself," muttered Mowbray, leaping down from the wagon.

"Do," replied Milt, "and when you come out you'll find me gone, and no chance on earth for a trade with Judge Hepworth. But you won't come down to anything right, so I may as well be going."

"Hold on! Nineteen——"

In three minutes more Mowbray, in a cold sweat, had come down to Milt's fourteen hundred offer. The matter was clinched with Judge Hepworth over the telephone, and it was arranged that Milt and Chub should drive the pair over in the road wagon.

"Am I a business man—what?" smiled our hero, as he held the whip over the fine pair along the road.

"My hat's off," muttered Chub, admiringly. "But Mowbray hates you now."

Judge and Mrs. Hepworth and Grace, all three smiling in their enjoyment, were out on the porch as Milt drove up and halted the steaming pair before the house. There was a stranger with them.

"Here's the pair, Farnum. They're mine," laughed the judge, softly. "That's why I called you over—to see that I've got the pair at last."

"You came to Mowbray's twenty-four hundred, did you?" asked the horse expert, descending from the porch and going toward the handsome pair.

"Did I?" echoed the judge. "Not much, Farnum! You may be a horse expert, but young Bradlock

beats you as a trader. He got them for fourteen hundred, and the bargain's clinched."

"Got this pair for fourteen hundred, did he?" inquired the horse expert. "Smart young man, is he? Not Much! This ain't the pair you wanted, judge. It's another matched pair altogether, and worth about six hundred dollars!"

CHAPTER XX.

A LESSON IN MAKING SUCCESS.

At that dreadful announcement, and the gasps that Mrs. Hepworth and Grace gave, Milt wished he could sink through the wagon seat, soak into the ground, and vanish forever.

"No, it ain't the same pair," repeated Farnum, slowly. "Mowbray has beaten you, after all!"

"Humph!" retorted the judge cheerily. "Don't you believe it. And don't you wilt, either, Bradlock, as you seem likely to do. It is the same pair. I know that. Besides, Mowbray couldn't beat me. If it wasn't the same pair, then the trade wouldn't hold, for I asked, particularly, over the phone, if this was the same pair, and he assured me that it was. Come to think of it, do you see that whitish star—the little one—on the nigh animal's chest? And that dark drab line across the off fore-leg of the other animal? Those were the marks that I noticed in the first place."

"I guess they are the same pair," Farnum admitted, grudgingly, and Milt's heart began to beat more naturally again.

"I'll make sure of it by talking to Mowbray, now, over the phone," uttered the judge, and vanished inside the house.

He came out again, announcing:

"Mowbray swears it's the same pair, and says I needn't hold to the trade. In fact, he says he's sorry, now, that he let the pair go at that price. He'll be glad to call it off, but I won't do it. Bradlock, my hat's off to you as a business man! Mowbray was trading on his knowledge that I wanted this pair badly."

"And I traded on my knowledge that he wanted to sell," laughed Milt.

"Humph!" uttered Farnum, going away with a sour face.

"That expert of yours, judge," whispered Milt, "must have put up a job with Mowbray to make you pay the top price."

Before another half-hour was past Judge Hepworth handed Milt two fifty-dollar bills.

"Why, what's this, sir?" gasped Milt.

"Your trading commission."

"But I didn't do it for this. I did it because I wanted your good opinion, sir."

"You'll have my very poor opinion of your business ability, after all," laughed Judge Hepworth, "if you decline to take your business profits. Be-

sides, I'm satisfied. I saved money and got just what I wanted."

So Milt took the money, though with a queer feeling.

Judge Hepworth afterwards satisfied himself fully that he had the same gray pair that he had bargained to get.

"Shall I tell you how I brought Mowbray to the point, sir?" asked Bradlock.

"Don't," retorted the judge, almost sharply. "Young man, if you have any business methods of your own, and they are winners, don't be in a hurry to tell them to others. Remember that successful business methods are property, and should be held as such. I've got another idea to impress upon you. Never tell all you know. If you do, everyone else will know as much as you do. If you keep some things strictly to yourself, Bradlock, you'll always know some things that other folks don't know."

"I see the point of that, sir. Thank you."

Nor did either Milt or Chub ever forget this well-meant advice.

"Here's your fifty, Chub," whispered Milt, a little later.

"But what for?"

"Your share in the horse deal."

"I didn't have anything to do with it."

"Chub, you've been sharing your money with me all along, and telling me we were partners. Ain't we partners yet?"

"But——"

"Take this money or a licking! Which?"

Chub decided on taking the money.

So elated were the Hepworths over having that coveted pair of matched grays that the boys had a delightful time there that day and evening. They spent the night there.

In the morning Judge Hepworth sent for them to come to his study. He was sorting over business papers.

"Now, how soon do you young men want to give me your past references and let me look them up, so that I can start you in something good hereabouts?"

"Good heavens! Look up our records—at least, what people believe are our records—in Westford and Royalton?" gasped Chub, inside, turning cold.

But Milt kept his nerve splendidly.

"Isn't there some other business we can attend to for you, first?" he asked smilingly.

"I believe I'm about out of business," replied Judge Hepworth, slowly, as he sorted over papers. "Here's one thing that you could do, but it can't be done. I'm paying a dreadfully high insurance on this house and other buildings and my belongings. I am paying a thousand dollars every five years. That ought to be reduced to six hundred or so, but I've written several insurance companies, and none of them will go below a thousand dollars. Here are the letters I've gotten from the different companies."

(To be continued.)

CURRENT NEWS

Dr. Fred O. Orcutt, who was staying at Oak Point Camps, Me., was awakened early one morning by a slight noise. Rising on his elbow he saw a fine buck through the window of the cabin. He picked up his gun, which was beside him, and shot the deer while still lying in bed.

French chemists are advocating the use of sea water in the making of bread. This not only would save the transportation of salt, it is urged, but would add materially to the healthful properties of the bread, owing to the fact that sea water contains, besides salt, a valuable percentage of magnesium and calcium. Ocean water is already being used, it is said, in bread making at Cherbourg, and the bread has gained a considerable reputation as a diet in various complaints.

By way of solving the disabled soldier and sailor problem, Great Britain has gone to great lengths in studying and devising occupations suited to those whom the war has treated somewhat harshly. One instance of this is to be found in the twelfth course at the Northampton Polytechnic Institute for giving a preliminary training to disabled soldiers and sailors as sub-station attendants, which has just been completed. A number of students who finished the course are now awaiting vacancies.

The response to the request of the Navy Department for binoculars, telescopes and spyglasses has been most gratifying. By November 23d, about six hundred of these instruments had been voluntarily paid over to the Navy. Letters received by the Department show that hundreds of first-class glasses would be loaned to the Government if the owners were assured of their return at the end of the war. To meet this contingency, the Service has been ordered to place a tag with the name of the owner, on each glass, with a view to keeping records of the same so that they may be returned after the war is over.

One of the young men employed by the Lehigh Valley Railroad in Towanda, Pa., purchased a new pair of overalls and found pinned inside the name of a young woman who was supposed to have made them. He accordingly sent a letter to her. The other night he received a letter reading as follows:

"I am a working girl, but I am making a good living and do not care to be married and support a husband, as would probably be the case with a fellow who gets mashed on a girl he never saw. Permit me further to say that I do not know how my card got in that pair of overalls, and that when I do marry it will be someone who can afford something better than a 47-cent pair of breeches."

What is said to be the most valuable tree in the world from a productive standpoint is the Gantor avocado, or alligator pear, near Whittier, Cal. Its average revenue to the owner is \$3,000 a year. At one time it was insured in Lloyds for \$30,000, but the company insisted that a high lattice fence be built about it to avert any damage from wind or carelessness, and it was feared that this might interfere with the health of the valuable producer and two years ago the lattice work was removed, causing a cancellation of the insurance policy. Other alligator-pear trees in Southern California produce large returns, but none so far has rivaled the Gantor tree, the fruits from which sell at from 50 cents to \$1 each.

Germany will fight harder to retain Alsace-Lorraine than any other territory in the present war; for Alsace-Lorraine, in the last analysis, is the foundation of the material side of Prussian militarism. It is upon the basis of her possession of this district, with its enormous mineral wealth, that Germany has built up her industrial imperialism, as the following facts will show. Out of 28,600,000 tons of iron ore, which Germany extracted from her mines in 1913, 21,000,000 tons came from Lorraine. Out of the 2,800,000,000 tons of iron ore deposit in Germany it is admitted by the German engineers that Lorraine alone contains 2,100,000,000. For the last forty years, the mineral wealth of Lorraine has been the principal source from which German metallurgy has gathered its raw materials and German militarism its munitions.

Quickly revolving smooth steel disks are now being used in Germany for cutting metals with, it is stated, results equally good and even better than those obtained by toothed saws. The actual cutting is not effected, as was formerly understood, by removing the metal, but by the heat generated by the friction between the rapidly revolving disk and the metal. That heat is so great that the metal is melted at the point of contact. The disk has consequently only to discard the molten metal, and by doing so clears the dividing groove. Naturally the steel disk also becomes heated in the operation, but as the greater part of its circumference is always out of contact, and continuously being cooled by air, and as the friction for each point of the disk circumference only lasts for a minute fraction of a second, its own heat remains always below melting point. When that fact was realized, toothless saws were soon constructed which were able to cut through all metals, even the strongest joists, in a minimum of time. The advantages over the toothed metal saws are that the disks do not wear out so quickly.

ON SUCCESS STREET

OR

TWO AND TWO MAKE TWENTY-TWO

By ED KING

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER II (Continued).

"Now I've got the price, I'll stop here a day or two," Jack decided, swiftly. "I may strike on something good by hanging out where the money is."

Flossie's father surveyed him with an amused smile.

"You're a pretty clever dog-trader, young man," that gentleman declared. "I didn't drop, at first, that dog-trading was your business, or you might not have gotten such a good bargain."

"Pardon me, I'm not a dog-trader," Jack shot back, coolly. "That man is a dog-trader. He's been having a run of hard luck, and, as I was on my way here, I told him I'd do my best to stir up some business for him. But dog-trading is out of my line. I've come here to be a guest of the hotel."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," cried Flossie's father, with another keen look at Jack's excellent clothes.

As coolly as if he had done this sort of thing for years young Thurston walked in to the desk, registered, and then strolled out again on the veranda.

An elderly man had just driven up in a touring car, which he left in the driveway before the hotel.

With him, on the front seat, was a brown-haired, laughing-eyed girl of sixteen. She was so pretty and so bright looking, that Jack, with all a boy's eye for good looks, could not look away from her at first.

He heard the girl's father speak to friends on the veranda. Next he heard someone introduce the elderly gentleman to someone as Judge Holman.

"Aren't you going to get out, Bess?" called the judge, turning to his daughter, who still sat in the car.

"Na, papa, for you promised not to stay long."

So the girl remained in the car, while interested Jack realized that he had suddenly acquired the names of father and daughter.

"Whew! I wish I knew some way to get acquainted," muttered young Thurston.

A boy of about ten came cantering up the driveway on a swift little Indian pony. The youngster dismounted and stood holding the pony by the bridle.

Of a sudden the big automobile began to move. The girl uttered a little cry.

"Here, Bess!" shouted Judge Holman, leaping up. "Stop the machine!"

"I can't!" quivered the girl. "Come quick!"

The judge was bounding down the gravelled driveway, in pursuit of the great car.

But it moved faster and faster.

"Throw the lever back, Bess!" screamed the judge. He added other directions, as he ran.

But the girl, ignorant of the machine, and rattled besides, only succeeded in getting the car going at a clip of twenty miles an hour.

By some bit of good luck she got the car turned from the driveway and headed up the street.

And now she appeared perfectly helpless, standing up in the car and looking with appealing, white face, all about her for signs of help.

"Here! Whatcher doing!" shrieked the boy who owned the pony.

For breathless Jack Thurston, in a twinkling, had snatched the bridle of the youngster's hand.

Slap! With a blow on the pony's rump, Jack made a flying start, a leap into saddle.

Then, bending forward low, digging his heels into the pony's flanks, Jack galloped as for dear life down that driveway.

Out into the street he pounded at a gallop, now standing up in his stirrups to take in the scene ahead.

He passed the judge but never looked at him.

With his eyes on terrified Bess, our hero shouted:

"No, no! Don't jump! Stay where you are! I'll try to reach you!"

CHAPTER III.

A SHADY-LOOKING DEAL.

Then spur! spur! spur!

Jack dug his heels against the ribs of that swift-gaited pony.

The auto was going fully twenty miles an hour, likely, at any instant, to collide with a vehicle or other object, with wreck and death to follow.

No pony in the world can keep up a gait of twenty miles an hour.

But the little beast that Jack rode was capable of going over a short spurt at a clip of a mile in two minutes.

If Jack could overtake the fugitive car in a few moments, there might be a chance.

If he failed in reaching the car promptly, then the pony would soon be distanced.

"On, on, on! You gritty little beast!" panted Jack, as the pony strained itself to its greatest leaps.

Click-clack! Click-clack! The girl in the auto car looked back with a flash of hope in her eyes as she saw mounted Jack overtaking the car.

With the pony panting, Jack dashed up to the corner of the car.

He made a flying leap, trying to land inside of it. To his horror, he fell just short.

Yet his outstretched, clutching hands closed on the rear of the machine above the seat.

Hanging thus, from the rear of the car, despair racking him, Jack must have lost his hold and fallen, beaten, vanquished, in the dust.

But a jolt over a bump, as Jack tried to struggle in, threw his feet up high in the air.

For just an instant he hung poised there, head down, fairly standing on his hands.

Then another lurch threw him forward. He plunged, head-first, inside the car.

Up in a twinkling, Jack climbed over the remaining barrier.

"Sit still; we're all right!" his voice rang, exultantly, as one hand rested on the steering wheel.

Then, gradually, he slowed down speed, made a turn at a crossing, and glided back down the road toward the hotel.

Now, he ventured to half-turn, glancing into the girl's grateful, admiring eyes.

"You want to learn, at once, Miss Holman, just how to run a car," he suggested, coolly.

"I never want to ride in an automobile again," shuddered the girl.

"Oh, you'll soon forget that," Jack assured her, smiling. "But don't forget to learn all about the uses of the wheel, the lever and the other parts of the machinery."

"You've saved me, but it nearly cost you your life," cried the girl, gratefully.

"It didn't cost me anything but the fun of riding a pony and a chance to dive, head-first, into your company," Jack retorted, laughing. "Look at that intelligent pony! Trotting straight back to the hotel! And here's your father!"

Jack slowed the machine down to a stop.

"Oh, Bess—thank heaven!" faltered the judge, his face ghastly white from the fright he had been through. "And you—young man! But I'll talk to you at the hotel. Let me in, in back."

Trembling, Judge Holman climbed up into the rear seat.

With one hand on the lever, the other on the wheel, Jack ran the car smoothly up the driveway to the hotel amid cheers and wild clapping of hands.

How the crowd thronged about him.

But Judge Holman, after helping his daughter

out, wrung the boy's hand, and then promptly marched him away, inside.

"Young man," gasped the judge, "I know only one way to thank you, and that seems worthless."

He reached to an inside pocket and brought out his wallet, but Jack shoved the wallet back.

"That way is quite worthless, sir," Thurston replied.

"But how can I thank you?"

"You've already done so."

"But how can I do more than merely thank you?"

"I don't know," Jack replied. "The time may come, though."

"Heaven grant that it does," cried the judge huskily. "But you are quite sure that I can't offer you a reward?"

"Quite," returned Jack, crisply. "Judge, with your permission, I will step outside and satisfy myself that Miss Holman is over her fright."

"One moment first. Your name? For I feel that, some day, I shall be able to show you the real depth of my gratitude. John Thurston? Thank you. Now, come on, Thurston."

Of course, within the next half hour, the excitement had quieted down. But Judge Holman, who was a power in this part of the country, had introduced the boy so generally that Jack felt more than at home among the wealthy guests of the Hotel Randolph.

What was better still, just before they went away in their car, Judge Holman and Bess both invited him to call.

"I shall be daring enough, then, to call to-morrow forenoon, with your permission," Thurston replied, with a quickness and coolness that surprised even himself.

Urged to do so, Jack found himself feeling wonderfully well satisfied with life.

After the Holmans had gone, Flossie's father, a Mr. Granger, appropriated Jack himself.

"You appear here in many strange roles," laughed Mr. Granger, "and you appear to be a success in all of them."

"Don't you think, sir," smiled Jack, "that success can become a habit?"

"I am satisfied that it will become a habit with you," smiled Mr. Granger. "May I ask where you live?"

"I'm just planning a new home," Jack replied, mysteriously.

"Where?" the other challenged, bluntly.

"On Success Street!" grinned the boy.

"Success Street? I'll back you to own a corner lot there."

"I'm hog enough to want a whole block on Success Street."

A woman carrying a bulky leather case tightly in her hands crossed the veranda to a carriage that had driven up for her.

(To be continued.)

INTERESTING TOPICS

FIGHTING CULEBRA SLIDES.

In the report of the Panama Canal for the fiscal year 1916-17 Governor Chester Hardy states that the East Culebra Slide is still in motion with occasional periods of increased activity, each period resulting in a settlement of the entire mass within the limiting break, and a horizontal motion toward the center of the bowl-shaped area. The east bank of the canal has been excavated several hundred feet beyond the limits of the canal prison so that the movements of the slide do not produce upheavals of the bottom within the limits of the canal prison. After each movement the dredges excavate the material outside the canal limits and have no difficulty in keeping it from reaching the channel. Altogether 23,259,909 cubic yards of material have been removed by dredges from the Culebra slides and it is estimated that 36,000,000 yards must yet be removed.

POLICE KILL BEAR IN SAN FRANCISCO STREET.

Wonderful things have come out of Calaveras County. First there was gold, and then came along Jim Smiley's wonderful jumping frog, and now comes the wonderful fighting bear.

The bear weighed 400 pounds and he was being shipped to a bird store on Market street. The bear fought all the way down from Calaveras County and finally tore away some of the bars of his cage.

When the cage was about to be unloaded in front of the store the fighting bear had arranged the bars so that he was about to get out. A crowd gathered—and then suddenly scattered.

Policeman Bert Wren and Percy McPartland hurried down to see what it was all about. The bear was just crawling out into the street. The policemen drew their revolvers and shot him to death. Then the crowd came back to look at the body and to feel the fur.

ALLIGATOR AND LIZARD STEAKS.

One need not become excited over the high cost of beef while there is an alligator handy. A steak from the latter is a toothsome morsel, having a combined fish and flesh taste, writes Prof. A. M. Reese of the University of West Virginia in the *Scientific Monthly*. Only prejudice stands in the way of our making use of alligators as well as lizards and all species of turtles as food. The domestic lizard is too small to be worth while, but South America produces a six-footer, the iguana, which is a famous delicacy.

We do not have to be told that green turtle and diamond-back terrapin are good, but these are costly articles of food, the price of a four-pound terrapin

being about \$6. The common varieties, however, the loggerhead, snapping and soft-shelled turtles, are also recommended. Do not feel sorry, by the way, for the green turtles in the markets because they are lying on their backs; this is the only position in which they can breathe out of water.

THE FRIGHTFUL SPEED FOR FIFTEEN MILES AN HOUR.

Alexander Wells, an old citizen of Wellsville, O., has a copy of an interesting and novel document issued by the school board of the town of Lancaster, Ohio, in 1828. The question of steam railroads was then in its incipient stage, and a club of young men had been formed for the purpose of discussing their value and feasibility. They desired the use of the schoolhouse for purposes of debate. This was looked upon by the members of the school board as an innovation bordering upon sacrilege, as indicated by their reply to the request, which is the document in the possession of Mr. Wells. It reads as follows:

"You are welcome to the use of the schoolhouse to debate all proper questions in, but such things as railroads and telegraphs are impossibilities and rank infidelity. There is no word of God about them. If God had designed that His intelligent creatures should travel at the frightful speed of fifteen miles an hour, by steam, He would clearly have foretold it through His holy prophets. It is a device of Satan to lead immortal souls down to hell."

STAINED GLASS MADE WITH THE X-RAYS.

It is well known that glass exposed for long to sunlight acquires a violet tint. In very old houses the windows facing south are often distinctly violet. Experiments recently made in the laboratories of the General Electric Company at Schenectady with X-rays prove that these can be used to dye glass in many colors, principally an amethystine violet and an amber yellow, but also green and bright yellow.

These colors, according to Mr. Rosenthal, who conducted the experiments, are due to modifications of the physical structure of the glass and not to chemical alterations. The color can be made to penetrate to any desired depth, from a mere surface tint to complete coloration of the entire substance. And the same method can be applied to tinting porcelain, enamel and precious stones.

An interesting and important fact about this glass that has been colored by long exposure to X-rays is that it becomes impervious to the radiations that have transformed it. Thus it can be used as a protection against the glare of the sun or the snow and against the X-rays themselves.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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Good Current News Articles

Southern California produces 87 per cent. of all the lima beans grown upon the face of the earth. The only other place where limas are extensively grown is on the island of Madagascar, and only about 250,000 bags are produced there. This year Southern California has grown 1,500,000 eighty-pound bags of lima beans, the value of which is about \$13,250,000.

It is announced from London that a group of New York financiers has acquired the patent rights for the manufacture of a triplex glass for war purposes. At present this glass is used in aviation goggles, automobile windshields, port lights of ships, observation windows, chart covers and so on. The manufacture of this glass in America will begin shortly, the plant for the purpose now nearing completion.

By the collection of drippings, bones, butchers' fat and greases from the army camps in Great Britain and their sale to makers of soaps, candles, fertilizers and glycerine, more than \$400,000 a month is now being returned to the messes of the regiments. United States Consul McBride writes from London that the glycerine alone made from these formerly wasted by-products of army kitchens is sufficient to provide explosive for 17,000,000 shells a year.

Leo. Guy, who was injured while working in the yards of the Cincinnati Northern Railroad Company, at Addison, Mich., has been notified that the award of the jury of the Lenawee County Circuit Court for \$35,000, has been approved by the Michigan Supreme Court. From a hale and hearty young man on January 13, 1914, the date of the accident, Mr. Guy has become deaf, almost entirely blind and a helpless invalid, requiring constant service from an attendant.

By a strange coincidence, the new \$1,000,000 oil tanker which recently came to grief on the breakwater at Tampico, Mexico, was wrecked squarely on the top of another steamer that was lost on the same spot several years ago. So exactly was the new vessel placed over the other that its boiler room was pierced by the boiler room of the older craft, says Popular Mechanics. The wreck occurred when the captain, unable to obtain a local pilot on account of a storm, attempted to enter port on his own calculations. The disaster serves to emphasize the danger of dispensing with the service of a local pilot when entering a harbor. It was estimated at the time of the accident that the new vessel, valued at \$1,000,000, would become a total loss. A loss of this kind is very keenly felt in these days in particular when vessels of all kinds have practically doubled in value.

Grins and Chuckles

Mother—What's the matter, children? Not dressed yet? Little Edgar—You see, mamma, Emma's got an apple and I told her we'd play Adam and Eve, so I can get the apple.

Merchant—I always give the preference to a married clerk. Friend—Why is that? "Because I find they are not in such a hurry to get home of an evening as the others are."

Customer—Tell me, waiter, why do you only recommend stewed tripe to-day? Is it so excellent? Waiter (confidentially)—No, it isn't even fresh; but if there's anything left we have to eat it.

"I believe absolutely in this idea of an all-milk diet," said a man. "I lived on nothing but milk for a whole year, and look at me." "On nothing but milk?" queried a physician. "At what age?" "During the first year of my life," quietly answered the man.

Willis (at the Ladies' Aid Society)—Now, what can we do for the poor boys at the front? Mrs. Gillis—I was reading to-day where the soldiers are always making sorties. Now, why can't we get the recipes for those things and make them ourselves and send them to the boys?

A man living in Charleston during the earthquake there some years ago felt that his duties required him to remain there to do what he might for the sufferers, but sent his six-year-old son out of the danger and confusion to the youngster's grandfather in New York. Three days after the boy's arrival the Charleston man received this telegram from his father: "Send us your earthquake and take back your boy."

THE SNAKE WOMAN.

By Alexander Armstrong

One day I received a visit from a gentleman, whose name for obvious reasons I withhold, but who is to-day one of our wealthiest bankers in the city. He came to engage my services in a case so strange and rare in occurrence and yet so interesting in nature, that I may well be pardoned for relating it here.

He had heard, he said, of my wonderful control over the lunatic patients in my charge; how, by some gifts of animal magnetism I was capable of swaying their shattered minds in any way I saw fit, and he hoped I would employ this faculty in curing his only daughter and dearly beloved child of a mysterious disease, undoubtedly due to strange mental derangement.

Pressed to give me the particulars of the young lady's malady he related the following wonderful story, the truth of which I can amply vouch for.

His daughter, he said, whom we will call Louise, had been sent to a female seminary at some distance from the city on the banks of the Hudson. There she had made the acquaintance of a young girl, whom likewise we will call Annie.

The two girls shared the same studies, the same dormitory, and became the most intimate of friends; in fact, a veritable female Damon and Pythias.

Annie was the more livelier and daring of the two, and one evening, happening to find an empty skiff moored to the banks of the river near the college grounds, where they were taking their customary stroll, laughingly proposed that they should take a sail on the placid waters of the stream in the soft glow of a summer sunset.

Louise at first objected; but upon her companion affirming that she would go whether accompanied by her or not, she consented, and together they sailed out on the bosom of the Hudson.

It was never definitely known how the skiff came to be upset, but an hour later that night it was discovered by some fishermen floating bottom up; and the same men subsequently beheld in the light of the full moon, which had risen above the horizon, the forms of the young girls lying side by side on the strand, where they had been washed up by the waves.

The reckless, daring Annie was quite dead, but Louise recovered consciousness under the immediate ministrations of those who discovered her.

Her first act, on being restored to her senses was, with a wild burst of anguish, to throw herself across the body of her drowned friend.

And now occurred the circumstances which was the cause of all that subsequently followed.

As she did so, a huge water snake darted out from under the body of the dead girl, and poising its head in immediate proximity to Louise's face, uttered a terrible hiss, and then immediately disappeared, apparently into the corpse itself.

Louise uttered a piercing yell, and fell backwards in a swoon.

Thus she was conveyed to the seminary by some of the fishermen, while others who remained behind succeeded in killing the snake, and took charge of the remains of the ill-fated girl.

Louise's father was summoned by telegraph to the seminary, where he was informed of these facts and also the additional one, that when the girl awoke from her swoon she seemed to be entirely oblivious of her companion's fate.

She never once alluded to her, or spoke of the unfortunate sail and its sad consequences.

Thus years rolled by; and, on the particular day and hour on which the accident had occurred, they, that is the father, mother and daughter, were strolling along a deserted portion of the beach at Long Branch.

Suddenly, Louise, who was walking slightly ahead of her parents, fell flat on the sands.

In alarm they rushed up to her thinking that she had tripped over a stone, and perhaps hurt herself in her fall.

But what was their horror to behold their daughter go through all the graceful undulations of a snake. Rooted to the spot in terror and surprise, they could do nothing but watch her.

Now she wriggled along the sands for some moments, then she would suddenly dart her head and shoot out her tongue. All the while a hissing sound would issue from her throat, so like that of a serpent that a person not seeing her would not believe otherwise than that a reptile was in his immediate vicinity.

It took the parents some moments to recover even partially from the dread stupor into which their daughter's extraordinary behavior had thrown them, and with their anxiety on her behalf was mingled a feeling of joy that no one but themselves had witnessed this strange phenomenon.

They carried her to the hotel, and, placing her at once in bed, summoned a physician from New York, who happened to be a guest at the same stopping place.

To him they confided what had happened.

He had never heard of such a case before, and, as Louise seemed now to have fallen in a profound sleep, advised them to wait until she should awake.

She slept uninterruptedly for twenty-four hours, and, though somewhat surprised on opening her eyes to find herself in bed, had not the slightest recollection of what had occurred.

Under the advice of the physician they returned to New York, and consulted with all the eminent specialists in nervous diseases in the city. They all agreed that the brain of the young girl had received a severe shock, and predicted a repetition of the strange attack every thirty days, at least. They prescribed various remedies, all of which were entirely ineffectual.

Many months had now elapsed since the melancholy drowning affair, and with the regularity of

clockwork these fits had returned always at the same time.

As a last resort the father had come to me and offered me a quarter—nay, half of his fortune, if I could cure the child.

I told the father that it was necessary that I should be introduced into the house as a friend and not in my professional capacity, and even take up my residence with him for some time.

To this he gladly consented, and as it was not difficult for me to obtain a leave of absence from the asylum, I was introduced that very evening to Louise as a distant relative of the family, who had just arrived from abroad.

I had looked toward a meeting with this fair unfortunate creature, with a great deal of curiosity; but after I had exchanged a few words with her this feeling gave way to one of deep sympathy and solicitude.

She was now eighteen years of age, tall and finely developed in form and a slight shade of melancholy rested on her pure oval countenance, which gave it an air at once tender and attractive. I will at once confess that though I was a bachelor of thirty-five, I fell in love with my interesting patient, and, though it was barely probable that she would become my wife, I did nothing to restrain my inclinations, knowing that my very love would aid me greatly in obtaining a mastery over her mind, which was my all-important object.

I had been in the family about a week, and was in my room musing over the peculiarities of neutral affections in general, and that of Louise in particular, when her father hastily entered and with pallid cheeks and trembling lips informed me that the decisive hour had come.

I hastily descended to the parlor with him, and as I entered the room a sight met my eyes which I will never forget as long as I live.

In the center of the room stood her mother with her hands clasped as in prayer and the hot tears streaming down her furrowed cheeks, while on the floor glided and wriggled the beautiful girl.

And the symptoms—the baleful look, the hissing sound—already described, were present.

With an effort I shook off the feeling of awe which possessed me, and advanced boldly towards Louise.

She gave a spiteful hiss as she saw my approach, and darting at me with a celerity that took me somewhat by surprise, attempted to bite my hand. I, however, caught both her arms in mine, and then began the tug-of-war.

Fixing my eyes on hers with a glance that had often served to cower the most dangerous maniac, I strove to force her on her knees before me.

But she seemed to be endowed with superhuman strength, and several times almost succeeded in throwing me.

The struggle had all the characteristics that are observed in conflict between a wild animal and a

boa-constrictor, and all her maneuvers partook of a subtle, snaky nature.

For upwards of an hour the combat raged, the parents, who had dried their tears, watching the unusual contest with undivided interest.

Finally I succeeded in throwing her heavily to the floor, when a cry of pain escaped her lips and she swooned away.

She slept longer than usual after this last attack and when she awoke she stated that she had had a dream in which she was struggling on the edge of a precipice with a ferocious giant who had hurled her into the abyss, and that, in falling, she had struck her side against a sharp stone.

She was much surprised on finding a blue, livid mark on the side of her body, and wondered how, if it was all a dream, she came to be injured.

I was quite elated with the success of my first encounter, and was anxious to renew it. I was too impatient to wait for the lapse of another month, and determined to bring about the attack at an earlier period.

For this purpose I purchased at an antiquary's a stuffed snake of the same genus and species as the one which had so affrighted her, and one evening when I was alone with her in the parlor, suddenly displayed it before her.

The result was as I anticipated. She immediately was seized with another fit.

The struggle which ensued was an exact counterpart of the previous one, my triumph, if anything, was a little more difficult, as she now looked upon me as an enemy, and exerted all her power to overcome me.

I will not dilate all the successive encounters of mental and physical prowess we engaged in; suffice to say that gradually I lost the power of bringing on an attack whenever I chose, and that for some time they only occurred one a month, and even these became less and less violent. As they did so the memory of her ill-fated friend, and the circumstances of the latter's death, came back to her, faintly at first, as the fleeting vision of a long-forgotten past, but after a while with more distinctness, until, one evening, I heard the whole story from her own lips.

Then I suggested to her parents that she should be brought to the grave where rested the remains of the unfortunate girl.

This was done, though not without some misgivings on the part of all of us.

Louise, however, did not fall into convulsions, but knelt for over an hour beside the marble tombstone in silent, tearful prayer.

"Is it not strange," said she, when we set out for home, "that poor Annie should have been dead so long, and I not know it until now?"

Is Louise entirely cured?

Well, reader, I do not know. For years she has been my wife, and she fondly nestles to her bosom a girl baby, whom we have named Annie. Perhaps she will never again be so strangely affected.

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

INVENTS BOMBING AIRPLANE.

Fred C. Hayne, of Grand Rapids, Mich., has invented an automatic driverless airplane for bombing purposes which may play an important factor in war on Germany. The machine is controlled from the engine in a manner which is being kept a secret by the inventor.

Each machine, it is said, could carry 1,500 pounds of explosives and could be sent any distance from 100 feet to 500 miles. On reaching its destination the explosives would be dropped and the machine itself would be blown to pieces, so that it would be of no use to the enemy. A fleet of the machines could be directed against an ammunition depot, the inventor says, and bring complete destruction.

Mr. Haynes has shown his plans to Senator Smith and Government officials.

TELEGRAM TAKES ELEVEN YEARS.

One day recently a London newspaper office received the following letter: "I beg to acknowledge your telegram despatched to me January 22, 1906, and received on Tuesday, January 7, 1917, thus taking eleven years to come fifty yards, that being the distance between the local post-office and my shop."

Of course there is an explanation of the delay. The telegram was handed in at Fleet Street Post-office on January 22, 1906, at 2.07 P. M., and was received at an Essex Post-office at 2.36 P. M. the same day. At that period telegrams were placed in a chute leading from the receiving room to the counter for delivery, and it appears that on its way the naughty telegram slipped in between the woodwork and hid there for eleven years.

A few days ago a Post-office engineer making some repairs rescued the wire from its "dug-out." It was forthwith delivered by the postmaster in person with courteous apologies for the delay and any inconvenience incurred.

13-YEAR-OLD MAINE BOY KILLS A BUCK.

The deer season in Maine is a thing of the past, but one of the most interesting stories brought to light is that of a thirteen-year-old boy who killed a buck.

The boy is Kenneth Gray, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Gray of Black Narrows, Me. Kenneth was accompanied by seven-year-old Lewis Pinkham, and Gray, armed with a small 28-gauge gun, not far from Edgcomb saw a doe. Both hid in the underbrush and when opportunity offered the thirteen-year-old boy fired at the doe and missed.

Suddenly the boys were startled when a big buck dashed out of the woods, making straight for the young hunters. Gray told the younger boy to stay where he was. As the buck charged the Gray boy

brought his 28-gauge gun to his shoulder and fired. The shot stopped the buck.

In its struggles to get closer to the boys it finally fell to the ground, unable to rise again. The deer was fatally injured and the boys were able to tie the legs of the buck with a chain. Thus, making sure of their capture, they rushed home to get help to bring the buck out of the woods.

CACTUS CATTLE GUARD.

An ingenious foreman on an Arizona railroad recently conceived the idea of using the cactus plant as a cattle guard at railroad crossings. The first, which was planted a few months ago, has proved an unqualified success. Not a single animal has attempted to cross it. As a matter of fact, both horses and cattle are thoroughly familiar with the species of cactus used, and fight shy of it as they would of a rattlesnake.

A frame of two-inch by six-inch timbers was placed on edge and fitted between the tracks. In the bottom of this structure are a few inches of sand and gravel in which the cactus plants were placed. The cactus is very long-lived, but as it grows in abundance along the railroad, it can be renewed if necessary. As the thorns will pierce an ordinary boot or shoe, it was necessary to place a piece of timber along the bottom bar of the fence to allow employees to cross.

This is by far the cheapest form of cattle guard in use on any railroad.

AUTOMOBILE TIRE MADE OF COTTON ROPE.

The carcass of a tire has so long been a series of cotton fabric permeated with rubber that to propose any change in its construction is almost like wrecking a sacred institution.

But an inventor has come to light in Andover, Mass., who is no respecter of traditions or the existing order of things. He has put cotton and rubber together in a way that is nothing short of amazing.

His invention, specifically, is a machine which builds a tire carcass of cotton rope in continuous strands. Cords are used in some other tires, today, but never rope, and never in unbroken strands.

This new tire, the Carlisle Cord, invented by F. B. Carlisle, departs abruptly from all precedent in another particular. Practically all tires to-day boast of imported cotton, while in the Carlisle goods old-fashioned American cotton is used, and, strangely, it produces a carcass which, it is claimed, outwears its imported contemporaries about 25 per cent. Just one strand of this American rope lifts 235 pounds without breaking and one square inch of the tire carcass has a breaking resistance of more than a ton.

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

STEFANSSON SUMMER PLAN.

Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the arctic explorer, according to Captain A. Lane, who arrived at Fairbanks, Alaska, January 15th, from the Arctic Ocean, bringing direct news from the explorer, was preparing to make a 300-mile dash over the ice north and west of the western Canadian arctic coast during the Summer of 1918, in search of more new land.

Stefansson, he said, intended to leave his present base in April and hoped to reach Wrangel Island, off the northern Siberian coast, in July or August. He planned to spend the 1918-19 Winter on the island and end his explorations by sailing through the Bering Strait to Nome, Alaska, in 1919.

WEDS AS PRISON OPENS.

True to her promise to wed Thomas Carrigan, alias Thomas Patrick Hogan, bank robber, if he was given a Christmas pardon, Miss Pearl Morris of Topeka, Kan., was married to Carrigan by the Rev. Father J. P. Melies, Catholic chaplain of the Penitentiary at Jefferson City, Mo. The ceremony was performed a few minutes after the bridegroom was released under his parole. The couple will go "somewhere in Kansas" to live.

Carrigan was convicted of robbing a bank at Phillipsburg, Laclede County, of \$1,800 by blowing the safe. He was sentenced to ten years and came here in 1914.

Miss Morris, who was engaged to Carrigan before he came to prison, has been unremitting in her efforts to get a parole for him. She declares she will make a good man out of him. She formerly lived in Kansas City, but gave her home address as Topeka.

FATAL RESULTS OF FEEDING NUTS TO LIVE STOCK.

The shortage of fodder in Holland is affecting the health of live stock because of substitutions—in some cases fatally.

Recently reports have been frequent of the death of stall-fed animals, attributed to spoiled or otherwise unwholesome feed. In many such cases the animals have been freely given acorns, chestnuts and beechnuts, unshelled and uncooked. All of these nuts, it is averred, in their natural state have poisonous elements, especially in the shells. It is said that horses have died within twenty-four hours after eating raw and unshelled beechnuts in considerable quantities, the stomach and intestines being fatally disordered.

Experts advise that nuts be fed to stock in limited quantities, not more than a kilo (2.2 pounds) at the utmost per day, and then only after they

have been shelled and boiled, care being taken to throw away the boiling water. It is remarked, however, that nuts can be fed more freely to pigs than to other animals, and that, besides, they are very fattening.

BOSTON'S NOVEL RED CROSS APPEAL.

Boston has employed a novel appeal in her campaign for Red Cross membership. A gigantic wooden soldier, fifteen feet high, with blood-stained bandages wrapped around his head, neck, and one arm, is leaning for support on an equally wooden and equally altitudinous Red Cross nurse. This pair of statues is making the journey up Tremont Street, from Boylston to Park, and is moved forward forty-five feet for each 10,000 added to the membership.

Rosy-cheeked girls in Red Cross uniforms are stationed here and there along the route to present the appeal for membership to passersby.

The locale for this demonstration was undoubtedly chosen with craft. Whoever fights his way up Tremont Street, or down it for that matter, in the face of a Winter wind realizes the agonies of exposure to the elements so keenly that he is apt to let go of a large share of his possessions to aid our troops in France.

THE PEOPLE ARE SAVING.

The English have not been considered a saving nation, and one of the most notable examples of the effect of patriotism on a whole people was the fact that during the year 1916, although purchasing billions of dollars of war bonds, the small savings banks depositors in England increased their deposits over \$60,000,000.

The patriotic appeal to the American people for war savings has met with a similar response. Statistics for the year 1917 are not yet available, but reports from various sections of the United States indicate that membership and assets in co-operative building, or savings and loan associations, increased at least 10 per cent., the same rate of increase for the year 1916 and about the average rate of increase for the last 10 years.

The small savings-bank accounts show a similar increase in numbers of depositors and amounts of deposits. Sales of War Savings Stamps also show a great growth of the habit of saving.

The American people have responded to the call of duty to economize and save. They have not only purchased nearly \$6,000,000,000 of Liberty Loan Bonds and War Savings Stamps but in addition they have increased their savings as above shown. Patriotism and saving are synonymous now, and economy is a duty, and many millions of American citizens are doing their duty in this particular.

SNAPPER CIGAR.

The real thing for the cigar grafter. If you smoke you must have met him. He sees a few choice cigars in your pocket and makes no bones about asking you for one. You are all prepared for him this time. How? Take one of these cigars snap-pers (which is so much like a real cigar you are liable to smoke it yourself by mis-take) Bend the spring back towards the lighted end, and as you offer the cigar let go the spring and the victim gets a sharp, stinging snap on the fingers. A sure cure for grafters. Price, by mail, ten cents each, postpaid or three for 25c.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

GREAT BURGLAR PUZZLE.



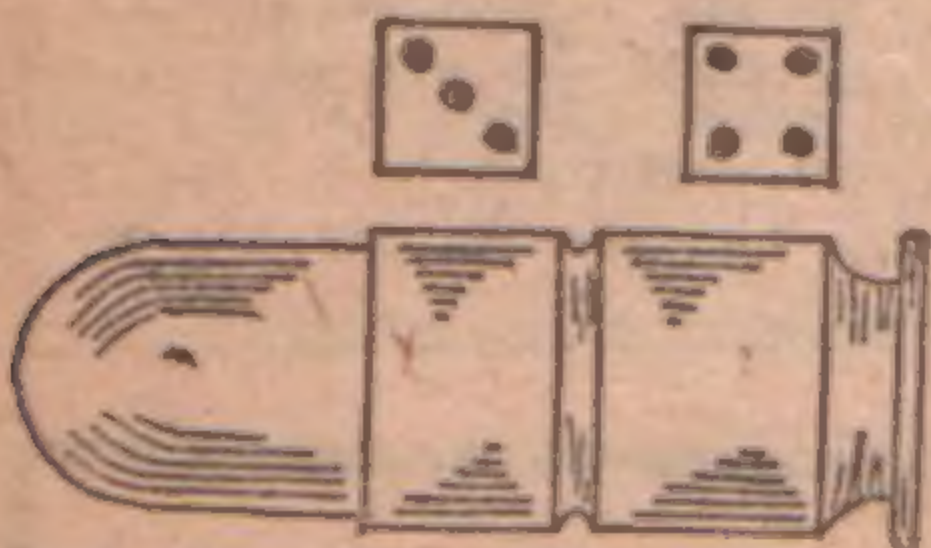
The latest and most fascinating puzzle ever placed on the market. Patented May 30. It consists of four revolving dials, each dial contain-ing 16 figures, 64 figures in all. To open the safe these dials must be turned around un-till the figures in each of the 16 col-umns added to-

gether total 40. The puzzle is made on the plan of the combination lock on the large iron safes that open on a combination of figures. Persons have been known to sit up all night, so interested have they be-come trying to get each column to total 40. In this fascinating puzzle. With the printed key which we send with each puzzle the fig-ures can be set in a few minutes so as to total 40 in each column.

Price 15 cents; mailed, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

DICE BULLET.



This Bullet and contents will afford you lots of "game." Not, however, the kind of game usually "got" with bullets. The illustration may sug-gest the idea. This little novelty consists of a real shell fitted with a hollow "bullet," and contains two small bone dice. This will make a very acceptable gift to any of your soldier friends. Each 15 cents, by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

LAUGHABLE EGG TRICK.



This is the funniest trick ever exhibited and always produces roars of laughter. The per-former says to the au-dience that he requires some eggs for one of his experiments. As no spectator carries any,

he calls his assistant, taps him on top of the head, he gags, and an egg comes out of his mouth. This is repeated until six eggs are produced. It is an easy trick to per-form, once you know how, and always makes a hit. Directions given for working it. Price, 25 cents by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

JAPANESE MAGIC PAPER.



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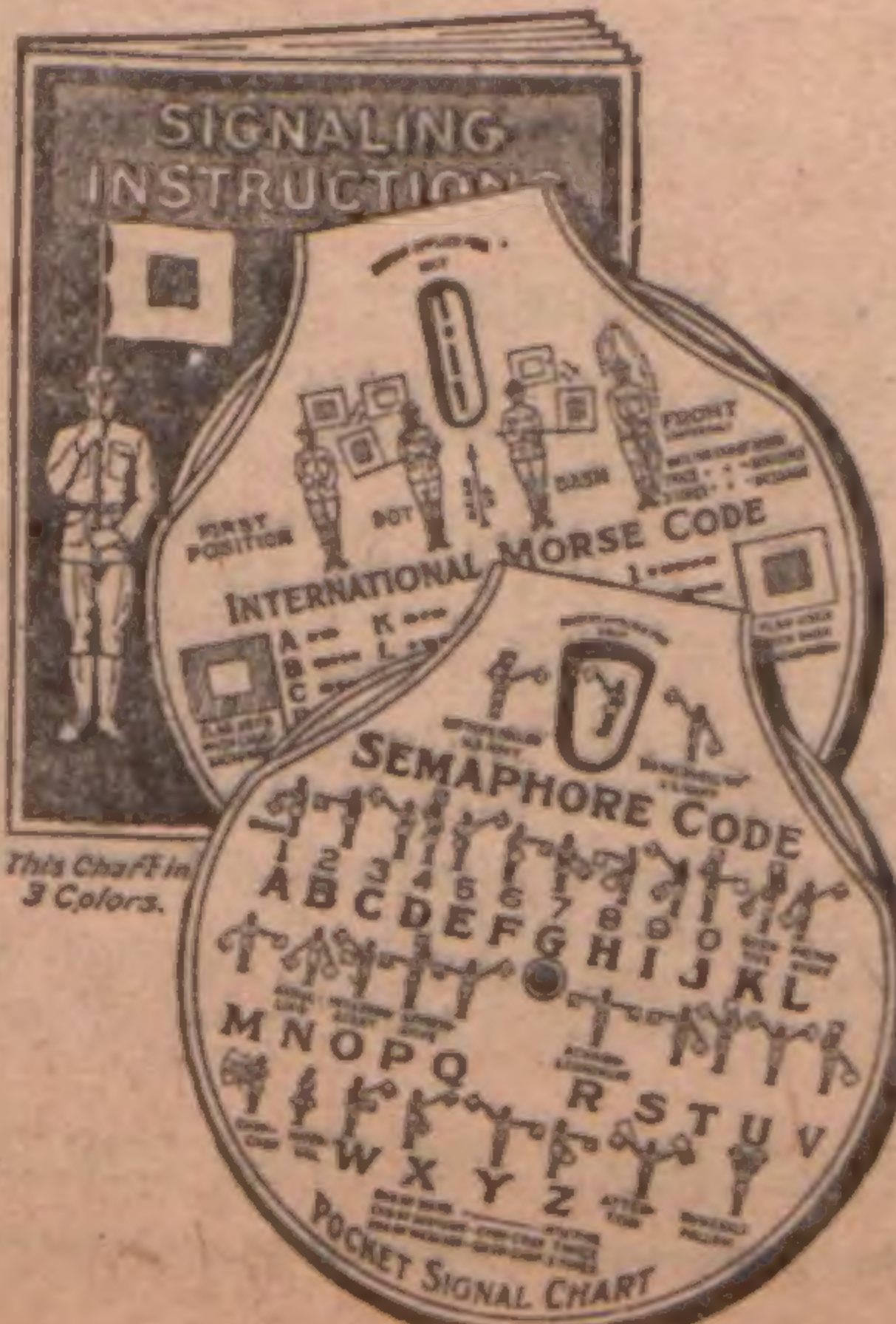
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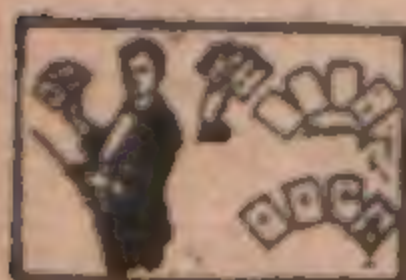
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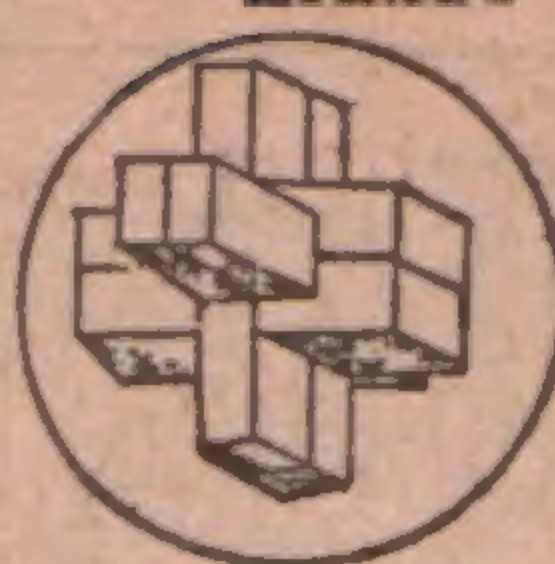
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